















LETTERS

FROM

MALTA AND SICILY.









SPEIRONARA

LETTERS

FROM

MALTA AND SICILY,

ADDRESSED TO

A YOUNG NATURALIST.

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BY GEORGE WARING,

AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN'S MISSIONS," &c. &c.

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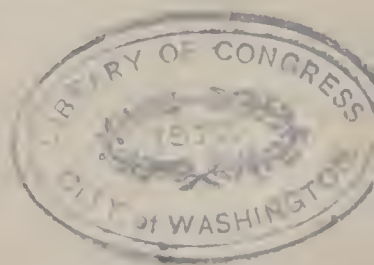
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## LETTERS FROM MALTA AND SICILY.

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### LETTER I.

STEAM-PACKET, "FLAMER,"

*Gibraltar Harbour, Nov. 18th, 1833.*

SOME years ago, when reading that most interesting book, "Drinkwater's History of the Siege of Gibraltar," I thought that nothing could give me greater pleasure than a visit to the wonderful "rock," where our countrymen made such a gallant defence and endured so many hardships. And now, when my desire has unexpectedly been gratified, what can be more tantalizing than my present situation—in the harbour of Gibraltar, but not allowed to set my foot upon the shore.

When we left Falmouth, that town had not yet been officially declared quite free from *the cholera*; consequently we could not be furnished with “a clean bill of health,” as it is called, and for want of this we are prevented from landing at any healthy port in the Mediterranean without first performing quarantine. Is not this vexatious? We are lying close to the pier, and a plank reaches from our vessel to the shore, but if any of our company were to step a single yard beyond the middle of this forbidden bridge, he would immediately be addressed in no very gentle terms by a surly officer, called a “Health Guardian,” who is continually walking backwards and forwards on the quay, and if *his* admonitions should be disregarded, a sentinel with a loaded musket is close at hand, with orders to *shoot* any obstinate transgressor of the quarantine regulations.

But I must not forget your parting injunction, to send you not only a description of the natural productions I might meet with in the course of my land wanderings, but also a relation of anything remarkable that might occur during our voyages from place to place. Though the distance to Malta is only about half accomplished, we have already met with an adventure which threatened a most disastrous termination to our voyage, though, happily, it has only occasioned a few days' delay, by obliging us to put back to this port to repair our damages. The date of this letter will show you that something unusual must have happened to have detained us here so long, for you may remember that the packet left Falmouth on the sixth of this month.

That day was so dismally cold, and wet, that it was quite consoling to think that

in a very few days we should have left this November weather behind us, and should be luxuriating in the delights of a more temperate climate and clearer atmosphere. About eleven in the forenoon the commander of the packet came on board with the mail-bags, upon which we immediately weighed anchor, and paddled out of the harbour. We had not proceeded many miles, however, before we began both to hear and to feel a very unpleasant thumping at every stroke of the engines. This soon increased to such a degree that the order was given to "stop her." We now learned that one of the piston-rods, which was making its first voyage, was rather too long, so that it came in contact with the bottom of the cylinder at every stroke of the engine. After an hour or more spent in fruitless attempts to remedy this defect, our engineers were at length obliged to dis-



connect the starboard, or right-hand engine, from the main shaft, and we proceeded by the power of one engine alone—our speed, however, was still about six miles an hour. The engineers, poor fellows, were toiling all the remainder of that day and a great part of the night in shortening the piston-rod by cutting off nearly half an inch of the top with cold chisels and hammers, an operation which the motion of the vessel made it very difficult to perform, causing the men frequently to miss their blows, and occasioning not a few sadly bruised fingers and bleeding knuckles. A portable blacksmith's forge was brought upon deck, and one man was almost constantly employed in repairing the chisels broken or blunted in this most tedious chipping operation.

On going on deck the next morning we could see no land in any direction. The

wind being directly against us we were prevented from setting any sail, and for want of this to keep her steady, the vessel rolled tremendously. This most distressing motion very soon compelled me to seek for consolation in my snug little state-room, where I remained the whole of that day and the following night, not very unwell, but in that doubtful state which made absolute repose delightful. This first stage of sea-sickness is not at all unpleasant to me so long as I remain perfectly quiet, but any great exertion of body or of mind will soon bring on a more advanced and suffering stage of the disorder. Even the exertion of reading becomes intolerable if continued for more than five or ten minutes.

The next day (Friday, 8th) it blew very hard from the northward, causing what one of our officers called "a nasty tumble of a

sea," but as the wind was more favourable we could now set some canvass, which prevented our vessel from rolling so vehemently. About noon it suddenly occurred to me, that seasickness was a disease of the imagination only, and that it might be conquered by a strong effort; pleased with this idea, I immediately dressed and went on deck, but in less than two hours I was compelled to admit, either that the theory was false, or that I had not sufficient resolution to give it a fair trial. We were now in the midst of that ever-troubled sea, the Bay of Biscay. Having once more taken refuge in my comfortable state-room, I resolved not to quit it again till the weather should become more moderate. However, in the evening our kind-hearted and attentive little steward persuaded me to take a cup of strong coffee, with a small piece of very highly-peppered beefsteak, and shortly

after I had swallowed these stimulants all uncomfortable feelings vanished entirely. I spent the rest of the evening very pleasantly on deck, conversing with the officers, several of whom had suffered severely from seasickness. Wishing to prove the efficacy of the steward's prescription, I even descended into the engine-room, where neither the suffocating heat nor the smell of oil and melted tallow could occasion the smallest feeling of uneasiness.

Early the next morning we were delighted by seeing the land within a few miles of us on the left-hand, and on enquiry it proved to be Cape Ortegal, in Spain. The sea was now as smooth as a lake, and the weather had become so deliciously mild and spring-like, that during the last two days we seemed to have passed from November into May or June. During the greater part of the day



our course lay along the romantic coast of Gallicia, and we frequently approached within two or three miles of the land, which appeared very high and rugged, with scarcely a house, or a tree, or any signs of cultivation. In some few places, however, there were fields surrounded by stone walls, and we were informed that these were vineyards. Some of the mountains had a most singular and beautiful outline, topped with perpendicular pinnacles of rocks resembling towers and castles, and in one or two places, the whole side of a lofty hill as seen from the distance of five or six miles, appeared to consist of an unbroken expanse of white sand. We were surprised that we could not discover a single human being on the coast during the whole day, though we were continually employed with our telescopes curiously prying into the nakedness of the land.

A most desolate coast indeed it appeared, and had it not been for the very few walled enclosures, we might have supposed that we had been passing by the shores of an uninhabited country.

Our only fellow-passengers from England, two officers of high rank in the army, now made their appearance on deck for the first time since we had left Falmouth. We have found them very intelligent, agreeable associates, and though one is the son of a lord, and his companion nearly related, I believe, to a noble family, their manners are perfectly free from haughtiness or self-consequence. Far be it from me to insinuate that they are not *always* so affable and condescending to their inferiors in rank, but, *perhaps*, their present very agreeable behaviour may be partly attributed to the effects of long-continued and most distressing sea-sickness, which has con-

vinced them that they are but men. It is certainly a most humiliating malady ! That mortal must be high-minded indeed who is not brought down by it into the very lowest depths of self-abasement and disgust.

During the day we saw several gannets, or Solan geese, and a great number of birds which were like the common murre, except that their backs appeared to be of a reddish-brown colour. I should have been very glad to have shot some of them for the sake of their skins, had there been any way of picking them up without stopping the vessel, which, of course, was entirely out of the question. It was tantalizing to see these birds flying within shot without being able to obtain a single specimen. The only vessel we saw during the day was a large cutter, named the "Scorpion," which we passed within hail. As it was a dead calm she lay

quite motionless on the water, and her crew were basking half asleep in the sun.

At dusk we passed Cape Finisterre, when we left the coast, and the next morning (Sunday, 10th) we were again out of sight of land; but we had two very indistinct views of it during the day, once when off Cape Mondego, distant forty or fifty miles, and again at sunset. About noon we saw a large frigate in shore of us, which some on board pronounced to be one of Don Pedro's squadron. The weather was still delightfully fine and clear, and the sun so powerful that my shipmates were glad to place their seats on the shady side of the deck, but you know my chilly temperament and cat-like love of basking in the sunshine too well to suppose that I followed their example. As the weather was so fine, we had expected that service would have been performed on board: per-

haps this was omitted on account of the indisposition of the commander of the packet. Some little respect, however, was paid to the day by the officers and passengers wearing long coats instead of jackets, and by the men having a general washing and shaving, and appearing in clean clothes. We had also rather a better dinner than usual in the cabin.

Early the next morning the steward came to me with the information that the Rock of Lisbon was in sight, but I did not think it worth while to rise to see it, and at our usual time of appearing on deck, between eight and nine o'clock, no land was visible, nor did we approach the coast till evening, when we passed within about a quarter of a mile of Cape St. Vincent. On the summit of this promontory is a large monastery of Augustine Friars, but it was too dark for us to see



it distinctly. On this and on the preceding evening we witnessed the most splendid sunsets imaginable. The sky was perfectly clear, with the exception of a few large masses of clouds near the horizon in the west. When the sun had disappeared, these assumed a rich purple tinge, edged with the most brilliant crimson, a lighter shade of which colour extended more than half-way round the horizon, and, assisted by the reflection in the water, produced a most enchanting spectacle.

At noon on the following day (Tuesday, 12th) we came to an anchor in Cadiz harbour, about half-a-mile from the town, and we immediately hoisted our odious yellow quarantine-flag. We had previously fallen in with a pilot, who gave his directions to our helmsman from his boat towing astern, as the quarantine regulations did not allow

him to come on board ; or, rather, if he *had* come on board he would have been shut up for two or three weeks' purification in a lazaret. His knowledge of the English language appeared to consist solely of the three words, "starboard," "port," and "steady ;" and when he wanted us to start our engines he signified his wishes by a very expressive *revolutionary* motion of his hands. Soon after our arrival in the harbour, a boat came alongside with the English consul, and an important personage called the "Pratique Master," an officer having the general management of quarantine affairs. In this boat were about twenty other gentlemen, some of them consuls of various nations. We also received a formal visit from the captain of the port, who came alongside in a clumsy old boat, rowed by no less than fourteen oars, and with a great deal of ceremony



offered his services to our commander. Our "foul bill of health" prevented any person from coming on board, neither would they receive our letters and parcels till they had been purified by a dipping in a bucket of vinegar and water, having first had a large chisel driven through them in several places in order that the infected air inside might be allowed to escape! Parcels which appeared to contain small books and one of *silks*, did not escape this unmerciful discipline of the chisel and vinegar-bath, which treatment would no doubt entirely ruin the contents, and yet, such is the inconsistency of the quarantine laws, large boxes were allowed to be taken on shore unopened after a simple immersion in the sea.

Were it in my power, I would gladly give you some idea of the beautiful picture the town of Cadiz presents when seen from the

water. It appears to be built on a peninsula stretching out a long way into the sea, and forming an extensive and commodious harbour inside. Many of the houses have turrets on the roofs, and as they are built of a very light-coloured stone, the town has a beautifully clean and cheerful appearance. We could see several fine churches, and one which we were informed had been in progress for fifty years, and is still unfinished, for want of funds, I conclude. The scene was greatly enlivened by multitudes of fishing-boats, which were rigged quite differently from any we see on our own coasts, for they had only one sail, called a lateen sail, which reached from stem to stern. The boatmen had as foreign an appearance as their craft; most of them had high conical hats, with the brims turned up all round, and they all wore

a large red or blue shawl tied round their waists.

The only birds I saw here were great numbers of the small gulls called kittiwakes, and a common kingfisher, which flew past us when we were more than a mile from the shore.

In about two hours we again got under weigh, keeping our pilot in tow till we were outside of the harbour, and being now out of sight of the quarantine officers, he had no objection to sell us some fish, which he had before refused to do.

At eight in the evening we passed Cape Trafalgar, and at midnight we were opposite the revolving light of Tarifa, while on the right-hand the African coast was dimly visible. We had a long passage from Cadiz to Gibraltar, which we did not reach till four in the morning, (Wednesday, 13th,) having

had a strong head-wind all the way, with a short sea, which drenched us with spray. The instant our anchor was let go one of our nine-pounders was fired to give notice of our arrival. As I had been too much interested in this part of the voyage to leave the deck, I was now glad to sleep for a few hours, and in the morning I found that we were lying close to a pier, called "the New Mole." This is a considerable distance from the town of Gibraltar, of which we can see very little, therefore my observations on this most interesting place will be comprised in a very few words.

This celebrated "rock" is about fourteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, and towards the east is nearly, if not quite, perpendicular. The town is situated on the western side, where there appears to be a considerable tract of nearly level ground.

The part of the hill opposite us has a desolate and barren aspect, the vegetation consisting chiefly of low, stunted bushes, but towards the bottom are some pretty houses and gardens, surrounded with hedges of geraniums. We can also distinguish with a telescope many aloes and prickly-pear bushes growing apparently wild among the rocks. On nearly the highest point is a small signal-tower, from which a gun is fired at sunset and again at eight o'clock, immediately after which we hear the drums of the different regiments beating to quarters. At present there are said to be about five thousand men in the garrison, and upwards of four hundred guns on the batteries.

I had hoped to have seen, by the help of a telescope, some of the monkeys which still inhabit the upper part of the rock, but I have since been told that the few which

remain are generally to be found on the other side, which station they seldom quit except during violent gales of wind from the eastward; and my informant added, that at such times he had seen them scrambling over the top of the hill in a great hurry and consternation. On inquiring what these poor monkeys could find to subsist on in such a situation, he said, that he believed their food consisted chiefly of lizards and the fruit of the prickly-pear bushes. As there are no wild monkeys in any other part of Europe, it is supposed that this colony was established by some tame animals which had made their escape from captivity.

The quarantine regulations are, if possible, still more strict in this port than at Cadiz. The letters were taken to an office to be fumigated, but positive orders are issued that all parcels shall remain on board



till the packet touches here on her return to England from the Ionian islands, by which time it is supposed that any latent infection will either have declared itself or have become extinct. Notwithstanding this prohibition, a large tin box, closely soldered up on all sides, containing, as we were informed, a suit of clothes for an officer in the garrison, was sent on shore with no other purification than a very slight and partial washing of the *outside* of the box with salt-water. Our purchases are effected without any contact between the parties. The articles are deposited on the wide plank reaching from our vessel to the quay-wall, and our money is indeed treated as "filthy lucre," for it is always received in a pair of tongs, and well washed in the sea by the health-guardian. When we wish to send a letter on shore we drop it into a tin box which is placed on the

plank, and having retired, the health-guardian comes forward, closes the box, and sends the pestiferous contents to the fumigating-office.

Among many others who came down to the Mole to look at the packet on the day we arrived were two Barbary Jews, who were so disgusting and so unlike human beings in their appearance, that at first sight I almost thought that a couple of the monkeys had come down from the top of the rock to pay us a visit. They were dressed in loose, dirty gowns and yellow slippers, but their legs, which were of a mahogany colour, were quite bare. They regarded us with so much astonishment that we concluded they had never seen a steam-vessel before, and their wonder was expressed by a great deal of baboon-like chattering and gesticulation.

The three days that we remained here on our first visit were so dismally wet that we

were in some measure reconciled to the disappointment of not being allowed to go on shore. During this dull weather the top of the rock was frequently hidden in clouds and mists, to the great annoyance of the poor monkeys, no doubt. We amused ourselves during the intervals of the rain by exploring the country with our telescopes, by pistol-shooting, and by fishing; but in the latter sport we had not much success, catching only some little things called coal-fish, and one or two other sorts which were strangers to me. The water, which was beautifully clear, was absolutely swarming with these small fry, and we could see some very fine fish at the bottom, underneath the vessel, but these were too cunning to venture their lives for our baits.

Our crew were busily employed in stowing away the coals, which were thrown on the

deck by the people belonging to the wharf. Many of these men are a mixed race, between English and Spaniards, and have received from sailors the whimsical name of "*Rock Scorpions*." The engine-men were engaged in the disagreeable duty of cleaning out the boilers, in which the sediment, technically called "*the scruff*," was nearly an inch in thickness, and of a stony hardness. While these two operations, taking in coal and boiler-cleaning are going on, there is no peace nor comfort on board a steam-vessel. The incessant clang of the "scruffing-hammers" is so unpleasant that temporary deafness would be a blessing; but the dust from the coals is a still more intolerable annoyance. Every person and thing on board assumes more or less a tinge of black, and it appears quite impossible that the deck should ever be made tolerably clean again.

This is, however, effected by an operation called "*holy-stoning*," which is performed by scrubbing the planks with flat stones, assisted by sand and water. I cannot give you the derivation of the above term, but I know that by means of this process our black, filthy deck was at last made to look resplendently white.

Our vessel is about four hundred and fifty tons register, and has two sixty horse-power engines; these do not work very quietly, from which cause and from weakness in the vessel, there is often a very unpleasant tremulous motion. Our greatest speed during the voyage to this place was nine knots per hour; this was in a dead calm, and with perfectly smooth water, under which circumstances the Flamer goes much faster than with a fair wind and a moderate sea. I conclude that this is the case with all

steam-vessels, for the advantage gained by a fair wind on the sails is more than counterbalanced by the increased motion of the water and of the vessel interfering with the proper action of the paddles, which are sometimes immersed too deeply, at others hardly touch the water at all.

Our crew consists of a commander, master, two mates,\* a surgeon, purser, gunner, boatswain, carpenter, armourer, quarter-master, three cooks, two stewards, and a boy, three engineers, eight firemen, thirteen seamen, and two apprentices,—total forty-three. The duties of the vessel are carried on with the greatest order and decorum, the officers giving their orders without bullying, and the men performing their tasks cheerfully. Ex-

\* Midshipmen who have passed their examination, and are therefore qualified to receive the rank of lieutenant.



cept when taking in coal, everything is kept scrupulously clean and neat. Early every morning there is a vehement scrubbing and washing of the deck, the noise of which over our heads is not very pleasant to those who like to indulge in a comfortable morning's nap.

Our cabin is very neatly fitted up, but in quite a plain style, with very little ornamental work. The ceiling is decorated with pistols, cutlasses, and signal-rockets; and on deck we have two beautiful long brass nine-pounders. Our state-rooms are comfortable, and well-ventilated. They each contain two berths, one over the other; but as there are so few passengers, we escape the misery of the close companionship which is the consequence of this very common, but most barbarous and disgusting arrangement. We find the unoccupied berth a very convenient substitute for a chest of drawers.

On the evening of Friday, November 15, when it was too dark for us to enjoy the view of the rock, and of the opposite coast of Africa, we left the harbour, and proceeded on our voyage with a strong breeze from the eastward, and a considerable sea. Our company was now increased by three gentlemen from Gibraltar; but as the ladies' cabin was unoccupied, we still enjoyed the undivided possession of our state-rooms. We have also had an agreeable addition to our party, in my opinion, at least, in the shape of a playful, good-tempered pointer. But though Daphne amuses us by her tricks and gambols, I fear she has been the means of introducing among us a colony of fleas, from which we had hitherto been free, but which have annoyed some of us more or less since her arrival on board.

During the night and the following day,

we steered direct for Cape de Gata, a promontory in Spain, about two hundred miles from Gibraltar. This course carried us a considerable distance from the land, but we were near enough to have a most magnificent view of the mountains of Granada, and especially of the Sierra Nevada, or snowy mountain, so named from its summit being generally, if not always covered with snow. One of our fellow-passengers informed us that this mountain is the highest land in Spain.

At eleven at night we were off Cape de Gata, or "Cape de Gatt," as it is usually called by sailors, who give this headland an ill name, and believe, or pretend to believe, that a misfortune of some kind almost always befalls them when they pass it. In proof of this, they are fond of repeating two lines :

" Off Cape de Gatt  
I lost my hat."

I wish that no worse misfortune than the loss of a hat had befallen *us* off this unlucky Cape, but we had scarcely passed it, when the accident happened which, as I have informed you at the beginning of this letter, has obliged us to put back to this port (Gibraltar) to repair our damages.

About twelve o'clock, as several of our company were seated round the table in the cabin, we heard loud voices, and a running to and fro over head. Fearing that a man had fallen overboard, we hastened on deck, and here the cause of the alarm was apparent. Notwithstanding the gloom of a cloudy midnight, we could see a large brig, not fifty yards off, running down before the wind directly upon us; and though the officer of the watch and others were hailing her with all their might, she continued her course, as if determined upon our destruction. And now

the cry was, "Stop the engines—stop her, or she'll be on board of us!" But this order was either given too late, or it should not have been given at all, for the next instant the fearful shock took place, the stem of the brig striking us just abaft the larboard paddle-box, smashing the quarter-boat and the bulwarks on that side, and stripping away all the shrouds of the mainmast and the iron stays of the chimney. At this juncture, seeing the brig's jib-boom just over my head, I jumped down the companion-ladder, to avoid being struck by it.

Immediately going upon deck again, I found everything in frightful confusion. A man met me, exclaiming, "It's all over, sir! she is going down with us!" and there were cries of, "She has cut us right in half!" and "Lower away the boats!" By this time the brig had got clear of us, and was some dis-

tance astern. Notwithstanding our energetic hailings to heave to for us, her people returned no answer, but a light was now visible for the first time since she had been seen. She continued her course as if nothing had happened, and we might have fancied from the dead silence on board her, that she had been a "phantom ship," if she had not given us a proof that she was composed of very substantial and unyielding materials.

For some minutes after this fearful encounter we continued in the greatest alarm, every person on board believing that his last hour was come; for we concluded that our vessel must be in a sinking state from the effects of the violent shock she had received, and there appeared very little chance of safety in the boats, as there was a good deal of sea running, and we were at least twenty miles from the nearest land. We were fifty



in number, and as our largest boat had been carried away, we had only a small gig and a jolly-boat remaining. However, we were proceeding to hoist out the latter, for the gig was already in the water, at some distance from us, with a midshipman and five or six hands in her, when an officer came aft with the joyful intelligence, that as yet there was no water in the hold, and that he believed the engines and paddle-wheels were uninjured.

Never to my ears had the human voice sounded so melodiously before. For nearly two hours we were now busily engaged in securing the chimney and masts by temporary shrouds and stays, while the engines were worked gently to keep the vessel's head to the sea to prevent her from rolling; for as the chimney was entirely unsupported on one side, there was the greatest danger that

with the motion of the vessel it would fall overboard, and if this had happened we should have been in a sadly crippled condition indeed. When this danger was happily averted, we proceeded to ascertain what further damage we had received, and by the help of lanterns we could see that in the place where the brig struck us she had left a large piece of her "cutwater," as it is called, firmly wedged into the hole she had made in our side. Several of the planks of our deck were also split and forced upwards. After enduring such a violent concussion, is it not wonderful that our vessel continued nearly, if not quite as tight as before the accident? Everybody seemed to take it for granted that she would resent such rough treatment by becoming incorrigibly leaky, but happily everybody was very much mistaken. And yet the Flamer is not considered by any means a

strongly-built vessel, and the tremulous motion, the strange sort of *shuddering fit* she so often experiences when the engines are at work, proves that her frame is not very robust.

Finding that there was not much probability of our being compelled to take refuge in our boats, we now hoisted in the gig, and a sea striking her just as she was brought alongside, she received a blow which rendered her perfectly unserviceable. What a pitiable condition we should now have been in if any misfortune had befallen us before we reached a port; for our only remaining hope, the jolly-boat, would not have safely carried more than twelve persons.

When our battered vessel was in tolerably sea-worthy condition again, our commander held a short consultation with his officers. He then informed us, that it was their united opinion, that in our present state it would be

quite unsafe to proceed against a head-wind and sea to Algiers, the nearest port in our track, where we could receive the necessary assistance for repairing the damages, and that, therefore, he had determined to return to Gibraltar. Accordingly about two o'clock in the morning, (Sunday 17th,) we bore up, and reached this port in safety at nine at night. We again fired a gun, and burnt a blue-light; this so strongly illuminated every part of the vessel, that the people on shore could have had no difficulty in making out who we were, and, doubtless, many were the wonderings and conjecturings about the cause of our return.

We kept a good look out for the brig all the way from Cape de Gatt, and seeing nothing of her, we thought it possible that she might have reached this port before us. This not being the case, we are under serious

apprehensions that she has foundered, for it is not at all probable that she would pass the Straits without putting into some port to repair. From the short and imperfect view we had of her, she appeared to be a vessel of about two hundred tons, and from her jib-boom and other parts left on our deck, she is supposed to be a foreigner. As far as I am able to judge, the accident was occasioned solely by the negligence of her people in not carrying a light, and in not keeping a look out, for we always had a large lantern on each paddle-box. But the opinion of a landsman is not of much value in these cases.

We have been detained here a shorter time than we had expected, for seven or eight ship carpenters were immediately sent on board, and have been hard at work day and night. The part of the vessel under re-

pair is separated by ropes, stretched across, to prevent our people having any communication with them. The piece of the brig's cutwater, left in our side, is about six feet long and two broad. Everybody here joins us in the opinion that we have had a most wonderful and providential escape, and that had the vessel struck us in any other part, we should most certainly have foundered, for where we received the blow there is a sort of false side, made of thick plank, which broke the force of the shock considerably.

Last night it blew a heavy gale from the eastward, but the wind became more moderate towards morning, and this has been the hottest day we have had since leaving England. The thermometer in the cabin now stands at seventy degrees, though as much air as possible is admitted, and the boiler-



fires have been extinguished for so many hours that the temperature cannot be affected by them.

A salute of twenty-one guns has just been fired from a battery of eighteen-pounders in honour of the birthday of the queen of Spain. The echo from the rock was very grand.

Our commander says that we shall sail in the afternoon. A messenger has just come down to the Mole for our letters, and I must conclude.

## LETTER II.

*Lazaret, Malta, Dec. 4th, 1833.*

A FEW hours after I had closed my last letter, our repairs were completed, though in a very rough and temporary manner, and we once more took our departure from Gibraltar. As we had now the advantage of daylight, we had a fine view of the rock, and of the opposite coast of Africa, where the most remarkable object was a mountain called Ape's Hill, near to which lies the town of Ceuta. The gale of the preceding night had raised a tremendous swell, which continued during the next day, and occasioned the vessel to roll very uneasily. Instead of steering for the unlucky Cape de Gatt again, we now

shaped a course which carried us within sight of the African coast, about the middle of the second day after we left Gibraltar. On the first day we saw no land, though we passed very near to Alboran, a small uninhabited island, which at some seasons of the year is said to abound with turtle.

At nine the next morning (Thursday 21st) we passed the meridian of Greenwich. The water had now become tolerably smooth, and we began to enjoy ourselves again. Though we were no longer annoyed by sea-sickness, the violent and incessant rolling motion we had experienced for the last day or two, was very unpleasant, and almost irritating, making it impossible for us to walk, or sit, or lie with any degree of comfort. We saw the African coast once or twice during the day, but so indistinctly, that I should have supposed it to have been a cloud on the horizon. A

shoal of Albicores were observed chasing some flying-fish, but the latter, though seen by some on board, were not visible to my eyes.

We passed Algiers at four o'clock in the morning of Friday 22nd, and we much regretted that it was too dark for us to obtain a view of this celebrated place. On this day our course lay along the coast of Barbary, at the distance of five or ten miles; but from the thickness of the atmosphere, we had not nearly so clear a view of the land as we had on the coast of Spain and Portugal. The hills were of moderate height, and many of them were covered with low woods to the summit. With our telescopes we discovered many cultivated spots; and from the number of fires seen along the coast, we concluded that it must have been rather thickly inhabited. About noon we were off a large

shabby town, the name of which was unknown to any on board. I felt a great desire to land and explore this wild country, but one of our officers assured me that I should very soon wish myself on board again, as the coast was infested by roving parties of Arabs, by no means famed for their civility to strangers, especially when few in number, and unarmed. In the middle of the day the sun was so powerful that I was at last obliged to seek shelter from his rays, though in the shade the thermometer did not rise higher than  $63^{\circ}$ , the temperature of the water being  $65^{\circ}$ . Only one sail, and that a small fishing-boat, was seen during the day. In the evening we had a distant view of some lofty mountains, a continuation of the Atlas chain; and about midnight we passed within six or eight miles of Cape Bugeroni.

During the day we had been annoyed by

a long heavy swell from the northward, which increased towards evening, and caused our unstable vessel to roll so violently that we all passed nearly a sleepless night. From sad experience, I fear that H. M. S. P. Flamer, is very much addicted to this most distressing motion, even more so than others of the smoky sisterhood. We had quite recovered from our sea malady, but how could we sleep when we were rolled over from our backs to our sides, and back again, every half-second?

During our voyage from Gibraltar to Cape de Gatt and back, and again from Gibraltar to the coast of Africa, the current which usually sets so strongly through the Straits from the westward, was so slight, that our position was not sensibly affected by it. This may be accounted for by the prevalence of strong easterly winds, which have a ten-



dency to depress the water of the Mediterranean, and to force it out through the Straits, thereby diminishing, or for a short time even quite counteracting, the usual current. The same effect would be produced by the cessation of strong westerly gales, which would raise the water of the Mediterranean *above* its usual level, and if, while in this state of over-repletion, the wind should suddenly shift round to the eastward, it appears quite possible that for a time the current through the Straits might even set to the westward.

I remember we used to be taught at school, that the cause of this flow of water into the Mediterranean, was the prodigious evaporation which takes place from its surface, occasioning a loss, which even the many mighty rivers which empty themselves into it cannot supply. But I do not know whether such

an explanation is ever given in the present day. As I have not for some years read any observations on the cause of this extraordinary current, perhaps the speculations which follow may contain nothing new on the subject, but they may be so to you, and therefore I shall insert them.

It appears to me very easy to prove, that this influx of water cannot be occasioned by *evaporation*. For by a rough calculation of the whole contents of the Mediterranean, of the quantity of water annually poured in through the Straits, and of the proportion of *salt* contained in that water, I find that in two or three centuries the quantity of *solid matter* carried into the sea, will equal in bulk the whole of the water it contains. So that the Mediterranean would no longer be a sea, but a vast accumulation of solid salt.

Another cause that has sometimes been

assigned for this current, is the great loss of water occasioned by the absorption of the vast sandy deserts on the northern coast of Africa. No doubt these deserts are thirsty enough, and they may imbibe and evaporate a great quantity of *water*; but the same difficulty occurs here as before,—what becomes of the *solid matter*? It would either be deposited in the Mediterranean, or the continent of Africa would, in every two or three hundred years, receive an increase equal in bulk to the whole contents of that sea.

Perhaps such considerations as these may have led the inquirers into the cause of this phenomenon to conclude that the Mediterranean must have *an outlet* somewhere, by which the prodigious quantity of water poured in through the Straits may be again discharged. I leave the rivers out of the

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question, because as the water they supply is fresh, it may be supposed to be all lost by evaporation, without occasioning any deposit of solid matter. Now, although at the only *visible* communication with the main ocean, at Gibraltar, there is almost always a strong inward current *at the surface*, it has been supposed that *at the bottom* there is an equal flow of water from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. I have never heard that the existence of such a counter-current has been proved, though it certainly would not be very difficult to ascertain it. But has any cause ever been assigned for this extraordinary contrary motion of the water?

Should it, however, be proved, that the waters of the Mediterranean are *not* discharged through the same channel by which they are received, then we may be certain that there exists a subterraneous passage in

some part of this sea; but the situation of this extraordinary tunnel, its course and place of exit, must, I conclude, ever remain matter of vague conjecture. I wish it were in my power to give you any further information on this interesting question, but I have now no opportunity of consulting books on the subject.

On Saturday the 23rd, the water became smoother, the weather still continuing very fine and mild. We were at too great a distance from the African coast to distinguish more than the bare outline; but in the afternoon we passed very near to Galita, a high rocky island, about three miles in length. It appeared to be uninhabited, but we were informed that there are multitudes of rabbits on it, the progeny of a few pairs left there some years ago.

On Sunday nothing remarkable occurred,

except that in the morning we spoke the Rainbow frigate, homeward bound from Malta, commanded by Sir John Franklin, the Polar navigator. An officer was sent on board us to learn the news from England. Our commander sent them an English leg of mutton, which is considered a very great delicacy by those who have been long from home. At noon we passed within about five miles of Pantellaria, an island twenty or thirty miles in circumference. The top was entirely concealed by clouds. I have been informed that convicts are sent to this island from Italy and Sicily. It is said that on the summit there is a large lake of unfathomable depth, probably the crater of an extinct volcano.

Early in the morning of Monday 25th, we were off the harbour of Valetta, the chief town of Malta ; but as it was too dark for us



to venture in, we lay to for an hour, and let off some rockets to give notice of our arrival. One of these rockets reminded me of my first essays in the pyrotechnic art, for instead of mounting gloriously into the heavens, it darted off in a horizontal direction, and plunged into the sea before it was half burnt out. By seven o'clock we were moored in the quarantine harbour, where the packet remained twenty-four hours to take in a supply of coals, and to allow time for the mails to be made up. We were now informed that we must undergo fourteen days purification in our present quarters, the lazaret, but our two fellow-passengers from England, who were bound for Alexandria, escaped this imprisonment, embarking the same day in a steamer for the Levant. The three gentlemen from Gibraltar have apartments next to ours, and these are our only companions in captivity at present.

The lazaret is a very large building, with a square court in the middle, from which a wide flight of steps ascends to an open gallery running all round, and communicating with the different apartments. The ground-floor is used for warehouses, fumigating-rooms, and other offices. With the exception of the doors and window-frames, I believe there is not a particle of wood about this building; the walls, floors, and roof of which are composed of a soft light-coloured stone, resembling Bath stone. The apartment allotted to my companion and myself is an immense dismal place, forty-three feet long, twenty-six broad, and about twenty high, with the roof supported upon arches. This room serves us for bed-room, dining-room, and drawing-room, but at present it has very much the appearance of a *laundry*, for we have been ordered to un-

pack all our clothes, and to hang them upon lines. The walls of this airy apartment are ten feet in thickness, and there are six large folding-doors, which do not shut very closely. The only articles of furniture provided by the establishment are a few rush-bottomed chairs, a deal table, and two bedsteads, which have neither sacking nor posts. All other necessities, beds, linen, cooking-utensils, &c. we have been obliged to hire ; but, as the innkeepers in the town are constantly in the habit of providing these articles, the only difficulty lay in deciding which of the various applicants to prefer. There is a fireplace in our room, but we have hitherto had no occasion to use it, for the weather has been delightfully mild, and though the building is composed entirely of stone, and its base is washed by the sea, there is no feeling of dampness or chilliness even on

coming into it from the hot sunshine. We have no carpet of any sort over the floor, from which we suffer no inconvenience except from the dust produced by the wearing away of the soft stone.

The first night we passed here was rather a dismal time, for as we were strangers to the customs of the place, we had not yet engaged a servant nor procured a proper supply of food, and the people belonging to the lazaret would not give us the smallest assistance. However, we made a meal on some dry bread and some milk, which had been sent from the inn, and about seven o'clock, feeling rather cold and very miserable we went to bed.

But we are now quite comfortable and happy ; we have hired a Maltese servant, an active, civil young fellow, very clean in his person, and with a tolerable knowledge of

English. In conjunction with our fellow-prisoners, we have also engaged a boat and two men to wait on us during the time of our quarantine. This makes our confinement much less irksome, as we are allowed to row about the harbour, and to land in one or two places with the permission of the guardian, who always accompanies us, to prevent our having any communication with the people on shore, or with other boats. For the boat and men we pay only two shillings a day, the men providing for themselves; that is, they *profess* to provide for themselves, but I believe they depend very much for their support upon the provisions which leave our table.

Our prison is situated close to Fort Manuel, on an island opposite Valetta. Our servant crosses over to the town twice a day for our meals, which the innkeeper who

supplies us sends down to the water-side ready cooked. As a specimen of our manner of living, here follows our bill of fare for to-day. First, some excellent fish, like the English mullet; secondly, a dish of meat, which we at first supposed to have been the hinder half of a roasted pig, but which proved to be part of a lamb dressed with the legs and tail on; thirdly, a dish of quails; fourthly, a pigeon-pie; and, lastly, a *pear-pie*. Our dinners are generally finished by a desert of oranges, apples, water-melons, pomegranates, nuts, or walnuts. The inn-keeper's charge for providing ourselves and our servant with dinner, and bread, butter, and milk for breakfast and tea, is twelve shillings per day. Tea, candles, and fuel for cooking are paid for separately. For the use of beds, linen, &c. we pay about one shilling a day, and our servant has



half a dollar a day and his food. The only charge made by the establishment is about three shillings a day for the guardian. When we want any particular article from the inn, we write our commissions on a slate, which is not considered capable of conveying infection, and is suffered to pass without undergoing any purification. The fumigation of letters is thus performed. They are laid on shelves in a sort of cupboard ; a quantity of straw is then set on fire in a shallow iron pan, and the flame having subsided a little, a handful or two of composition, of which brimstone is the chief ingredient, is thrown over it, the pan is placed in the cupboard, and the doors are closed. In a few minutes the contents are considered to be sufficiently purified.

On the opposite side of the harbour is a little pebbly beach where we are allowed to land, for as it is enclosed between two pro-

jecting angles of the town-walls, it seems to be considered a sort of neutral ground. But even in this privileged spot a guardian is stationed, who speaks his opinion very decidedly when he thinks we approach too near to any person whose term of quarantine differs from ours. In this place, which we have named "Chiton Beach," from our finding many specimens of that shell there, we often spend several hours very pleasantly, searching for curiosities, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, for everything is valuable to persons so deeply infected with the mania of collecting as ourselves. On this beach we sometimes enjoy a delightful bathe, though against the advice of all the people here, who say that the water is too cold at this season, but to our feelings it is exceedingly pleasant and warm. In some places the bottom is covered with a beautiful

kind of polypus, having blue and lilac arms or branches, which we at first supposed to have been a sea-weed growing on the stones. When we bathe or wade in the water, the arms of these polypi stick fast to our feet, and breaking off, can only be got rid of by very hard rubbing. A handful of wet sand is the best application for removing them.

Our collecting ground being of very small extent, we have not yet found many curiosities. Besides the Chitons before mentioned, we find several species of sea and land shells, differing from those of our own country; and among others a pretty little reversed, or left-handed shell, *Clausilia tuberculata*. Before I left home, a scientific and most indefatigable collector informed me that these shells were common on this island, and he requested me to procure him some specimens. We have found

very few new plants, but I was glad to see the true Maiden-hair (*Adiantum Capillus veneris*) growing on the walls of the fortifications. Withering says that this beautiful fern is to be met with in the neighbourhood of Barry Island, in Glamorganshire, where, however, and in other places, I have diligently searched for it without success; but a few years ago my sister was more fortunate, finding it growing in abundance on the rocks at Dunraven, in the same county. There are but few sea-birds here, and I have seen none but some gulls, apparently the same species as our own, and a pretty little sand-piper, which would not allow me to approach very near. I have not found many insects. Almost the first time I turned over a stone to search for some of my favourites, I was rather startled by finding two small scorpions under it. We sometimes catch a curious

little fish, which has the power of adhering to any smooth surface under water by means of an apparatus like that of the Remora, or sucking-fish, from which, however, it differs in having the sucker on the belly, instead of on the back. We find this little fish on the pebbles in the shallow water.

I have now informed you how we spend our time in fine weather. But on wet days, and in the evenings, we find no lack of employment, for in addition to our own little library, one of our companions has kindly offered us any of his books, of which he has several hundred volumes. Then we have letters and journals to write, and in wet weather we are not without the means of taking exercise, for we have bought some tennis-balls, which afford us many an hour's healthy amusement, though I believe our system of playing is not very scientific. A

large unoccupied room makes an excellent tennis-court for us.

Our windows command a fine view of the opposite town of Valetta, and of the harbour ; and the scene is made very lively and amusing by multitudes of boats continually passing to and from the lazaret, and the vessels in quarantine. These boats bring us for sale various kinds of fruits, and among others pomegranates, which are about the size of an orange, and are full of seeds enclosed in a red juicy pulp. There may be something agreeable in the idea of eating pomegranates in the land of their growth, but in my opinion they have little to recommend them, except the beautiful colour of the pulp. When we purchase anything, the boatmen hand it up to us in a sort of scoop or shovel, in which we place the money, which, however, is not washed in the sea as at Gibraltar.



There is a terracè by the water-side where we are allowed to walk, taking care that we touch no one, not even the officers of the establishment, except the two guardians, our keepers, and the boatmen who are in quarantine with us. It is amusing to see with what extreme care every one avoids us, not from the fear of taking any disease, but because the slightest touch would subject them to the same length of confinement as ourselves. “*Noli me tangere*” is every one’s motto here. Near the lazaret there is a stone gallows, which our guardian, who is rather fond of a joke, assures us is intended for the execution of those who break out of prison ; but really this would be no easy task, for in addition to the thick walls of the building, we are constantly watched with the kindest care imaginable, and the doors are always closed soon after sun-set. To confess



GRAND HARBOUR  
FROM THE SILVEIRA BATTERY



the truth, this locking up is rather irritating to my feelings, by continually reminding me that I am a prisoner.

As we are allowed to row about the harbour, I thought there could be no harm in trying to catch some fish from the boat, and accordingly I bought some lines, but I was immediately informed that fishing could not be permitted without special leave from the superintendent of quarantine. Upon applying for this permission it was refused, for what reason we cannot imagine, unless it was supposed that a fish, having taken a bait which had been touched by a person in quarantine, might escape, and communicate an infectious disease to all the other fish in the harbour.

One day I went over to the town with our servant and guardian to fetch our dinner. On landing, we went into the Parlatorio, or *speaking-place*, where those who are in

quarantine are allowed to hold conversation with their friends in the town. It is a very long narrow building, divided into three parts by two low walls running lengthways, and about six feet apart, so that the healthy and suspected parties have that space between them, which effectually prevents any contact. In the middle division a guardian is stationed, partly for the purpose of handing over any article which those in quarantine may buy from the people on the healthy side of the house. Here there are generally a number of boys in waiting to execute any commission for us in the town, for which purpose they are provided with small slates, on which we write the name of any article we wish to procure, or we can send a message to our friends in this manner. There is a Parlatorio on a much smaller scale at the lazaret.



The softness of the stone of which the walls of our prison are built, has induced many of its inmates to carve their names, which are generally accompanied by the date and duration of their imprisonment. We have not added our names to the list, but one day I began to cut the initials of some of my friends on the bark of one of the trees on the terrace, when the old guardian begged me to desist from spoiling the tree, adding, "He feel as well as you!"

We had intended to have spent a few hours on Chiton beach this morning, but as the guardian stationed there would not allow us to land on the part we wished, which was the best place for finding shells, like pettish children, we showed our resentment by refusing to remain there at all. At a spring, employed in filling their water-casks, was a party of Greek sailors, some of whom were



fine-looking men, and they appeared positively handsome when compared with the very ordinary natives of this island. The only tolerably handsome Maltese I have yet seen, is the child of one of our boatmen, a boy about six years old, and he, I think, would be considered a pretty little fellow in any country, although, strange to say, he bears a strong resemblance to his papa, who is a very bull-dog in countenance. But you must remember, that almost all the Maltese I have hitherto seen, have belonged quite to the lower orders. As we rowed round the harbour on our return home, we wished to gather some beautiful yellow flowers growing on the bank, a few yards from the water's edge; but this pleasure was denied us, on the ground that it was against orders to land in that part. To comfort us for this disappointment, the guardian assured us that

they were only "*savage flowers*." We did not attempt to convince our companion that these "savage flowers" could really be valued by persons of sane mind.

On Sunday morning next we shall be set at liberty. The prospect of freedom is very delightful, though performing quarantine has not been so irksome as we had anticipated, for our time has been so fully occupied, that the days have passed rapidly with us. Indeed, were it not for a desire to explore the new country around us, and to collect and examine its various natural productions, I could be very happy in this place for a much longer time than we have spent in it, especially if many of one family were here together. I often think what an acquisition the society of a few dear, merry-hearted children would have been during our imprisonment. But I can easily believe that to many persons the

confinement would be most wearisome, especially to those who have but few in-door pursuits, and to whom the employment of collecting shells and insects would be an absolute punishment.

This letter will be sent by the *Flamer*, which is daily expected to call here on her homeward-bound passage from Corfu. I will write again by the next packet, which will leave Malta in about one month from this date.

## LETTER III.

*Valetta, Jan. 1st, 1834.*

IN my last letter I informed you that we should be set at liberty on the Sunday following. Nothing worth relating occurred during the short time we remained in the lazaret, except the arrival of the Flamer from Corfu, when we had the pleasure of again seeing our friends, the officers of the packet, but not of shaking hands with them, as that would have subjected us to another fortnight's quarantine. On the day before our enlargement, we received a visit from the medical man appointed to ascertain the state of health of those whose quarantine is about to expire. He asked one question only,

“Gentlemen, are you in good health?” which being answered in the affirmative, he made a low bow, and took his leave. Could we have had notice of his coming, we had intended to have been engaged in a game at tennis, which we thought would have been the best way of replying to his question.

We have changed our abode several times since we left the lazaret. We first went to the hotel from which we had been supplied with provisions, and then took lodgings for a week, engaging our quarantine servant to wait on us. Finding, however, that both he and our landlady were dishonest, we left our lodgings, and are now at another hotel, where we are very comfortably entertained; but we intend to remove into the country shortly.

I will now give you a short description of Valetta. The town, as you will perceive by

# M A L T A .

C. Ras-el-Kammich

C. Majesa

C. Abraso

Torre Rosso

Melleba B.

Palace

Wreck

Selmone

Monument Towers

St. Paul's B.

Kaura Pl.

Bay of the Salt Works

B. St. Marco

B. St. Maddalena

St. George's Bay

St. Julian's Bay

Sliema

Fort Tigné

VALETTA

Fort Ricasoli

Coradino

Kammich

Blata Baida

Marsa Seala

B. St. Thomas

Marsa Seirocco  
Itactia Rk.

C. Delimara

Miles

Note  
Cl. means Casal  
a Town or Village

B. Miggiar-el-Bacca  
C. Ras-er-rahep

Paullis

Ayn Ballut

Blat-tal-Bahria

Tal Kaus

Hermitage of St. Paul

Cl. Mosta

Cl. Naseiar

Cl. Balzan

Cl. Bicarora

CL Zebbug

Cl. Siggievi

Pietra Nera

Cl. Micabba

Cl. Crendi

Cl. Luca

Cl. Zorriek

Cl. Safi

Cl. Chereop

Cl. Cuda

Cl. Asciak

Cl. Zeitun

Cl. Zabbar

Floriana

Grand Harbour

Quarantine H.

Fort Manuel

Burmola

C. Benbisa

1 2 3 4 5





the map, is built on a peninsula, with a beautiful harbour on each side of it; that on the left, as we face the sea, is the Quarantine, and the other is generally called the Grand Harbour. Valetta would be considered a pretty town, for though the streets are narrow, they are very clean, and from many parts we have fine views of the harbours and of the open sea. The principal thoroughfare is Strada Reale, which runs the whole length of the town, from Fort St. Elmo to the Porta Reale, and is nearly three quarters of a mile long. In this street and in some others, there are many very good shops, where most articles of English manufacture may be bought at nearly as low a rate as in England, and those which are the produce of other countries at a much lower price. Many of the shopkeepers are Englishmen, and most of them

can speak our language. The convenience for foot-passengers is more attended to here than in many foreign towns, for almost all the streets have footways, which are formed into wide, easy steps, where there is much acclivity. In some parts the paving is composed of hard black lava from the neighbourhood of Mount Etna, but the common soft free-stone of the island is generally used for this purpose. This soon wears away, and makes a great deal of dirt and dust.

A stranger soon becomes acquainted with the geography of Valetta, as the streets cross each other at right-angles, and preserve the same name from end to end however long they may be. In some parts of the town are pretty little fountains of clear water, spouting up out of a low wall enclosing a small reservoir, and these little jets, which are about the size of a large quill, are



VALLETTA

FROM FORT MANUEL IN THE QUARANTINE HARBOUR



very convenient for the passenger, who holds his mouth over them, and thus slakes his thirst without any occasion for a drinking-vessel. But I believe that this apparently simple operation requires some practice, for in attempting to perform it I did not succeed very well. At the corners of some of the streets are images of saints, with lighted lamps before them. The business of cleaning the town is performed by convicts, some drawing a cart, and a party of five or six sweeping and shovelling, attended by two soldiers with bayonets in their hands. These poor convict scavengers are all in chains, which make a melancholy clanking noise, and those who are condemned for life have irons on both their legs.

The houses in Valetta are built in quite a foreign style, having flat roofs, which answer the purpose of courts or gardens for drying



clothes, and for cultivating plants in pots and boxes of earth, and at our hotel part of the roof is shaded by a trellis-work covered by vines, the stems of which grow in a court below. In fine weather it is very delightful to walk in this elevated garden, which commands a beautiful view of the quarantine harbour and of the open sea; and under the cool shade of the vines parties sometimes dine and drink tea in summer. Stone floors are almost universal, even in the bedrooms, though in the better sort of houses they are painted, and covered with carpet or matting. I conclude that the abundance of excellent and easily-worked stone on the island, and the absence of timber, is the chief reason for building in this substantial manner, but the intense heat of the summers may be another inducement, on which account also the rooms are very lofty, and have often two or three large fold-

ing-doors, and windows reaching nearly to the ceiling, with Venetian blinds outside.

Women-servants are not so much employed here as in England, but in my opinion their places are very well supplied by men, who perform their duties quite as well as women, and I would say, if I dared, more quietly and speedily.

There are a great number of Catholic churches in Valetta, but few of them have any beauty in their exteriors. From these churches there is kept up an almost incessant ringing of bells, which at first was very annoying, but we are now become more accustomed to it. The bells are hung in open belfries, and are rung by a man or boy, standing under them, with a rope fastened to the clapper, which he swings backward and forward, the bell remaining stationary; but we never hear a musical peal as in

England. In some of the churches there are confessionals, which are wooden stalls like watch-boxes, divided into two parts, in one of which the priest sits, and the person confessing kneels in the other, whispering through a hole in the partition. These confessionals being open in front, both parties are exposed to public view. On one of the churches is this inscription, "*Indulgentia plenaria, quotidiana, perpetua, pro vivis et mortuis,*" which being interpreted signifies, "Full, daily, and perpetual indulgence (or absolution, I suppose they mean,) for the living and the dead."

The cathedral church of St John, though very plain outside, is exceedingly beautiful within, but the gilding, with which the walls are nearly covered, has become sadly tarnished, and the pavement and other parts are in very bad repair. There are many paintings

in this church, some of which are much admired, but, in my opinion, by far the most beautiful part is the pavement, which consists of large stones, each formed of an infinite number of pieces of marble of different colours, white, red, and black predominating. Here are some fine monuments of the grand masters, knights of Malta, and in a vault underneath, lie the remains of La Valette, who founded the city of Valetta, and of La Cassiera, who built the church in which he is buried.

In our walks through the streets we meet a great many Catholic priests; they wear cocked hats, but in other respects their ordinary costume has nothing remarkable in it. On the day we left the lazaret, we encountered a very long procession of monks and others, in commemoration of the cessation of the plague, which many years ago de-

stroyed great numbers in this island. Some of the company carried banners and censers with incense, and two were playing on fiddles, while the rest chanted in a very melancholy tone. The monks wear a thick knotted rope round the waist, ostensibly for the purpose of self-flagellation, though perhaps it is not often made use of. I have remarked that some of these monks show a little dandyism in the proper adjustment of this article, and endeavour to make it as ornamental as possible, by selecting a piece of very nice white rope, neatly knotted at equal distances.

There is an English Protestant chapel in the palace, where service is performed twice on Sundays. As there is no organ, its place is supplied by the band of one of the regiments.

Most of the Maltese in Valetta and the

neighbourhood can speak Italian, and many of them a little English ; but a great part of the peasantry, especially those who live at a distance from the town, understand nothing but their own language, which is a corrupt Arabic. We have not seen much of the country-people, but we are informed that there is a great deal of distress among them from the want of employment. The lower orders in Valetta appear to be very well disposed, and they are certainly remarkable for sobriety, for though wine and spirits are very cheap, I have not seen a single instance of intoxication in a native. Though very frequently without shoes or stockings, they are generally clean and decent in their dress, and even the beggars have none of the squalid appearance of that class in other countries. The men wear large shawls round their waists, and straw hats or cloth caps,



with a long bag hanging down behind; in other respects their dress has nothing singular in it, and the women differ very little in theirs from English women of the same class, except that out of doors they wear a black silk cloak, called a “faldetto,” over their heads, without any other head-dress. The faldetto is also often worn by the more respectable class of Maltese women, though many of these are now beginning to conform to the English custom of wearing bonnets.

The beggars in Valetta are certainly a very great annoyance, and are most importunate in their petitions, in which the words “Carita, miserabile,” and “nix mangi,” are frequently repeated. We might be charitable here at a very small cost, for a single *grana*, a little copper coin, of which twelve are equal in value to a penny, is all the poor unfortunates ask for; but our friends have

cautioned us never, upon any account, to bestow even that miserable pittance, as in that case there would be no end to our persecutions. “Nix mangi,” means “nothing to eat,” the last word being an abbreviation of the Italian, “mangiare” but where the “nix” comes from I cannot tell you. One day a little chubby-faced boy ran after me crying, “Nix mangi, nix mangi!” though at the same time he had crammed his mouth so full of raw turnip, that he could hardly give utterance to the falsehood. From the constant repetition of the word “nix mangi” or “mangiare,” one of the steep streets leading down to the grand harbour, is commonly called “Nix Mangiare Stairs,” though I am not aware that the beggars are more numerous there than in some other parts of the town.

On approaching some of the streets lead-

ing to the water-side, we are assailed by multitudes of boatmen offering their services with an earnestness and pertinacity only to be equalled by the drivers of cars in some of the English sea-ports. These boatmen are very civil and attentive to their passengers, and are quite contented with a small remuneration, though they have no objection to overcharge strangers a little; but, perhaps, in this unamiable propensity they do not exceed their brethren of the oar in other countries. As Valetta is situated at the end of a peninsula, a great number of boats are constantly employed in conveying passengers across the harbours to the towns and villages on the other side. These boats are heavily built, but they are very safe and commodious. They may be about eighteen feet in length and six in width, and are nearly the same shape at both ends, with the

stems and stern-posts standing up about a foot and a half above the gunwale. These are a great assistance in getting in or out, especially in rough weather. The boats are kept very clean and neat. They are generally rowed by two men, one standing with his face towards the head, the other sitting in the bow, and rising from his seat at every stroke ; sometimes, however, they both stand. A rudder is seldom used except when carrying sail, but in the harbours they generally depend on their oars. These are very heavy and clumsy, and are attached to the gunwale by means of a single wooden pin and a loop of rope, so that they may be left in their places without any danger of their slipping overboard. Besides these boats there are some much larger, partly decked, which ply between Malta, the neighbouring island of Goza, and Sicily.

The Maltese are great anglers, and on Sundays and holydays we see numbers of men and boys, and sometimes women, on the rocks with their immensely long cane-rods, but I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing a fish caught by any of them. They make excellent horse-hair lines, and I have bought one thirty or forty yards in length for sixpence. When we were outside of the harbour in the packet, we heard a noise on the water like the ringing of a small bell, and on examination we found it proceed from a cork buoy placed there to mark the situation of some lines. On this buoy two little pieces of metal were suspended from a short upright stick, and as the motion of the waves kept them continually striking against each other, when the owner of the lines had occasion to examine them in the night, he was directed to the spot by the sound. Per-

haps this ingenious contrivance might be useful to the fishermen on our own coasts.

The market in Valetta is well supplied with all kinds of eatables, especially with fruit: oranges, lemons, pumpkins, (two feet or more in diameter,) water-melons, apples, pears, pomegranates, dried figs, nuts, walnuts, chesnuts, prickly-pears, &c. are in great abundance and very cheap; many of these fruits are brought from Sicily. Potatoes are not very good, though I have eaten worse in England, but the cauliflowers are of a prodigious size, and very cheap. They have here a curious sort of a turnip, which grows on a stem, four or five inches from the ground, the leaves sprouting out from the sides of the bulb; this, when boiled, is superior to the common turnip. Meat is cheap and tolerably good; fresh butter and cow's milk are very dear, but good salt butter may



be bought at nearly as low a price as in England. We are always supplied with goat's milk, which is so much like cow's milk in taste, that in tea or coffee the difference is not perceptible. Little flocks of quiet, meek-eyed goats, with immensely distended udders, are driven through the streets every morning to supply the inhabitants with milk, fresh and genuine. The drivers of these animated milk-pails utter the most doleful cries, which at so early an hour are rather disturbing.

Is it not delightful to dwell in a land where the finest oranges in the world may be bought for threepence a dozen? I believe they may be obtained at a much lower rate, for the Maltese tradesmen, like those of other countries, frequently ask for their commodities double the price they may be persuaded to take. The oranges here are

certainly very delicious, but, I think, not superior to the very best of those which are brought to England. Yet I have heard it said, that those only who have eaten the orange in the land of its growth have tasted it in full perfection. I am rather disappointed in the appearance of the orange-plantations. All those we have seen are surrounded by high walls, which in this island are said to be quite necessary, in order, I believe, to protect the blossom from the wind. Still an orange-tree, in any situation, is a beautiful object when loaded with ripe fruit, the bright colour of which forms such a fine contrast with the dark green of the leaves.

We have not added much to our collections lately, but we hope to be more successful when we remove into the country, and as the weather becomes warmer. One morning as we were exploring the neighbourhood of

Burmulo, on the other side of the grand harbour, we saw some most beautiful lizards of a brilliant green colour. These little animals were basking in the sun on the old walls of the fortifications, but upon the least alarm, sometimes even upon a shadow passing over them, they darted into the crevices between the stones with such wonderful agility, that we found it impossible to capture a single individual. So we were obliged to content ourselves with admiring their brilliant colours and graceful movements. But I was determined to procure some specimens; and it soon occurred to me, that if I could knock down birds in England with a pellet of clay from a blow-pipe, the lizards in Malta might be killed in the same way. Accordingly, the next morning I went in search of a tinman, and having fortunately found an artist who could speak a little English, after



GREEN LIZARD





a good deal of explanation, both by words and signs, and by now and then making use of his tools myself, I was at length in possession of an instrument which has proved to be quite powerful enough for the purpose. It is about a yard in length, and can be taken apart in three pieces for the convenience of carriage.

The first warm, sunshiny day we crossed the water again to make trial of the blowpipe, which answered admirably. With a pellet of soft pipe-clay, I found no difficulty in killing or stunning these nimble-footed lizards, so that they could not escape, and we brought them home very conveniently in a large wide-mouthed bottle of spirits of wine. These beautiful animals vary so much in their colours, that we at first supposed they were of different species. Some are a brilliant green, spotted with black; others



almost entirely green, or with longitudinal bands of green and yellow, and the young lizards are of a uniform dark brown colour. I have no means of ascertaining the scientific name of this species, but in size and form they very much resemble the common *Lacerta agilis* of our own country.

As we were walking slowly along in search of our game, I perceived upon the wall a very ugly animal, evidently of the lizard genus, but much larger than any we had before seen, and of a grey colour, so like the stone, that at a short distance it was difficult to distinguish it from it. Of course I lost no time in preparing to give him a shot, and had drawn in a good supply of breath for the purpose, when he took offence at the motion of raising the blow-pipe to my mouth, and whisked sideways into his hole with the speed of lightning. But we waited patiently

near the spot, and by approaching very cautiously with the blow-pipe pointed towards him, after several unsuccessful attempts, we at length had the pleasure of seeing him in our bottle. He proves to be one of those lizards which are called "*wood-slaves*," (*Gecko* ——) and an extremely ugly creature he is. He has a very large mouth, and the head and body are wide and flat, with the legs projecting sideways, so that he runs with the belly touching the ground, and he appears to move with equal facility and rapidity in all directions, backwards, forwards, or sideways. The colour is a brownish grey, rather lighter on the under-parts, and the back and tail are beset with protuberances, or warts. His eyes have a very unpleasant, and almost a *wicked* expression. They are nearly the same colour as the body, and have long narrow pupils like those of a cat

when exposed to a strong light. But though this animal appears to our eyes ugly and almost deformed from the flatness of his body and the position of his legs, yet these very peculiarities of form are most admirably adapted to his mode of life, his usual retreat being a narrow crevice in a wall or rock. He is a powerful and fierce-looking animal, and I have no doubt that he preys upon the smaller lizards, which he may very easily do, for though no longer, he is very much stouter and stronger than they are, and his mouth is so large, that he might swallow them whole. I have been informed, upon good authority, that a gentleman in this island had a canary-bird killed by an unusually large wood-slave, which climbed up the wall to an open window, and squeezed his flat body between the wires of the cage.

We have found several specimens of ano-

ther kind of lizard, (*Scincus* ——) nearly torpid, under large stones. They are very smooth and shining, like a blindworm, and the colour is light brown, with darker spots. We have captured only one snake, which is very like our own species, but he wants the beautiful yellow collar round the neck, which is so great an ornament to our English snake.

Lizard shooting is really an amusing sport, and without the assistance of the blow-pipe we should have found great difficulty in procuring specimens of these beautiful little animals. And though the *game is small*, the instrument and the ammunition used in this novel sport are very simple and inexpensive, so that the means are not disproportioned to the end obtained. In this respect the amusement I have described is more rational than our favourite sport of snipe shooting. For

in the latter pursuit the sportsman, carrying with him an apparatus which has, perhaps, cost him fifty or sixty pounds, and accompanied by his dogs and gamekeeper, after a whole day spent in wandering over moors and swamps, till, as the ancient angling book says, "*he is weete shode unto his taylle,*" will frequently return in the evening, having accomplished nothing but the destruction of two or three little fluttering jack-snipes, half-a dozen of which would barely suffice for his supper.

A few days ago we visited several of the public institutions in Valetta. We were accompanied by our Maltese friend, Mr. N——, a gentleman from whom we have received great kindness and attention. We first visited the House of Industry at Floriana, which institution was founded about one hundred years ago by the grand master,

Antonio Manuel; but at that time the inmates were not provided with any employment. In 1825 the building was much enlarged, and the institution entirely remodeled. It contains at present about two hundred and fifty young women and girls, who are employed in spinning, weaving, embroidery, lady's shoe-making, lace-making, &c. About three years ago a school was added, which is open for one hour only in each day for instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic; and although only two hours in the week are devoted to writing, the progress some of the girls have made is really astonishing. The establishment is supported partly by the sale of the articles made by the inmates, and partly by government. Every part of these extensive premises is kept in a state of the most perfect order and cleanliness.



Near the House of Industry is another charitable institution for the reception of poor men and women, who are too old or infirm for hard labour. A few of them employ a part of their time in making brooms. Among the inmates of this asylum we found one of our own country-women, who, I believe, came out to Malta as a servant in an English family. She told us that she was very comfortably provided for, but that she much felt the want of a cup of tea now and then, as this article was not supplied by the institution. We gave the poor old woman some money to procure a little of this luxury, so essential to the comfort of almost all English women.

We next went to a convent of Capuchin monks at Floriana. These poor men have no property but their house, and some small gardens and orangeries ; they are supported

chiefly by charity, and spend most of their time in going about the country preaching and visiting the sick. They are only forty in number at present, but the house is large enough to accommodate seventy or eighty. Their cells appeared clean and decently furnished, and over each door was a text of Scripture in Latin. In the church of this convent was a full-sized figure, I believe, in wax, of Christ after his crucifixion; one of those singular, and to me painfully correct representations, which the Catholics in this country exhibit, with a view to excite the devotional feelings of the beholders. Though offensive to Protestants, if others derive benefit from the contemplation of such figures, we have no right to ridicule them.

We also visited the gaol, where we were most politely received by the governor. It is an exceedingly well-conducted establish-

ment, and almost all the prisoners are employed, principally in making mats and straw-hats, in sweeping the streets, and in other public work. Their present number is between two and three hundred, forty-eight of whom are condemned for life. Refractory prisoners are confined in "a black hole," on an allowance of bread and water, and the industrious are rewarded by small weekly wages, a certain part of which they are allowed to spend in wine and other articles, and the remainder is laid by for them until their liberation. The daily allowance of food for each man is twenty-six ounces of good bread, thirty ounces of soup, made thick with macaroni, and two ounces and a half of cheese. Their drink is water. Female prisoners are confined in another part of the town. We bought some very good strong straw-hats at the gaol for two shillings

a piece: they are adorned by a wide black ribbon, which appears to be the fashion in this island.

On Christmas-day I witnessed a great many ceremonies at St. John's church, where some of the opera performers were engaged for the occasion. The music was very beautiful, though a great part of it was of such a quick lively character, that it appeared quite unsuited for devotional purposes. The leader of the band had no instrument, but in place of it a roll of paper, with which he beat time with so much energy, that the noise was very disagreeable. The next morning I heard some tolerably good music at the Carmelite church in Strada Teatro. At the door was stationed an old man, having before him a table covered with amulets, or charms, which consisted of pieces of linen about two inches square, bound with pink

ribbon, and having a rude representation of the Virgin and Child printed on them, with a blue riband to hang them round the neck. These amulets were offered for sale. In glass cases, hung against the walls of the church, were fragments of bones, said to be the relics of some holy saint; and in a larger case was a waxen bust of Christ, crowned with thorns. There was also a figure of the Virgin Mary, dressed rather too much in the modern style; and a large dagger stuck in her breast was intended, I suppose, to represent a literal fulfilment of the prophecy of good old Simeon, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." In this church I observed some very picturesque, and really beautiful groupes of women and little children on their knees, repeating their prayers with an appearance of the deepest devotion and sincerity. On entering the church they all

dipped their fingers in a vessel of holy water near the door, and made the sign of the cross on their foreheads. But very few men were present. In a small glazed frame was a curious Latin hymn, of which I send you a copy, with a translation by a lady. It appears to be in praise of St. Antonio of Padua.

Si quæris Miracula,  
Mors, Error, Calamitas,  
Dæmon, Lepra fugiunt ;  
Ægri surgunt sani.

Cedunt mare, Vincula ;  
Membra, resque perditas  
Petunt, et accipiunt  
Juvenes, et Cani.

Pereunt Pericula ;  
Cessat et necessitas ;  
Narrent hi qui sentiunt,  
Dicant Paduani.

## TRANSLATION.

If for miracles you seek,  
Let the dead arise and speak ;



Demons fierce the power obey,  
Death and sorrow haste away.

Ocean does its bounds forsake,  
Cleansed are lepers, fetters break ;  
Palsied limbs have strength again,  
Age and youth lost power regain.

Dangers vanish, want departs,  
Who such holy aid imparts ;  
Where these wondrous things befel,  
Let the men of Padua tell.

I am surprised to find that Mount Etna, though at the distance of about one hundred and twenty miles, is distinctly visible from this island in clear weather. I have seen it twice from the roof of our hotel. It appeared like a white cloud on the horizon, but with a perfectly clear and distinct outline ; and with a telescope I could distinguish the black crater, and the dark shadows on the sides of the mountain.

In a few days we hope to be comfortably

established in a small country-house, the property of a merchant in Valetta, to whom our letters of credit were addressed. This change will be very pleasant to us, for we are heartily weary of a town life. And in Valetta we are in a very confined, and nearly insulated situation, surrounded on three sides by water, and on the fourth hemmed in by prodigiously strong fortifications, which appear to a stranger an interminable labyrinth of ditches and embankments, flights of steps, and zigzag paths. When I pass through these wonderful defensive works, I regret my almost total ignorance of the noble art of fortification, a knowledge of which would prove that what now appears a mass of confusion and irregularity, is really a beautiful work of order and design, the result of fixed scientific principles.

## LETTER IV.

SLIEMA, *Feb. 6th*, 1834.

WE have now been living very happily in our country-house for some weeks, during which time we have been actively engaged in exploring and collecting both on the land and water. But I must first give you a short description of our country establishment and the neighbourhood.

The little village of Sliema (which word, being interpreted, signifies "*peace*") consists principally of summer residences of the inhabitants of Valetta, and is situated, as you will see by the map, close to the sea, on the north-western side of the quarantine harbour.

Most of the houses in the village are built on the top of the hill facing the sea, for the benefit of the refreshing breeze, for the summers are generally intolerably hot and oppressive, and the heat is increased by the reflection of the sun from the light-coloured walls and roads. Our house is pleasantly situated close to the harbour, and is sheltered from the cold northerly winds by a rising ground at the back, on which account it appears more suited for a winter than for a summer residence. I have marked its position on the map by a small cross. It consists of five or six rooms, finished and furnished in a very plain manner, with whitewashed walls and stone floors, even in the bedrooms; but these homely accommodations do not diminish our comfort in the least degree, for the house and everything in it is exceedingly neat and

clean, and after our many changes we are glad to have an abode we can call our own.

Our friend, Mr. R——, the owner of the house, has also spared us one of his own servants, and a more respectable, honest, and obliging fellow than Michele, I believe does not exist. To persons so little accustomed to housekeeping as ourselves, he is quite invaluable, as he purchases all our provisions, and, of course, has it in his power to impose on us to a great extent; but we have had several proofs of his integrity. His knowledge of our language is not so perfect as we could wish, and sometimes considerable difficulty occurs in making him understand our meaning. One day, after in vain endeavouring to explain to him the nature of an article I wished him to purchase, it was pipe-clay for lizard-shooting, I

rose up rather suddenly to look for the Italian word for it in the dictionary, when poor Michele retreated to the door in a great fright, thinking, no doubt, that I was literally going to beat my meaning into his head. We have also a very amusing old woman living in the house, a native of the island of Minorca. Madalena's language is a strange compound of Italian, Maltese, and English, and, I believe, with an occasional mixture of her native tongue. In short, she is in the awkward situation of one who has nearly forgotten her own language, and has not half learned any other. She is a very merry, kind-hearted old woman, always laughing and chatting to us, and she pretends to admire everything we bring home.

We have a large garden around the house, but it is not laid out with much taste. Its greatest ornament is the common scarlet



geranium, which grows most luxuriantly in this climate, and is now in full blossom. I have seen some plants seven feet in height. In a yard adjoining the garden, is an amusing company of turkeys, ducks, bantams, pigeons, rabbits, and guinea-pigs. Here also is a gazelle, lately brought over from the coast of Barbary; she is a beautiful little animal, though her legs are quite disproportionately small for the size of her body, and there really seems some danger of their being broken by her extraordinary leaps and gambols. On this account, as the ground in the yard is rugged and uneven, I am almost afraid to play with her, though she sometimes invites me to a game of romps by butting at me with her head. To teach her better manners I catch her by the horns and gently punch her soft nose. Her eyes are large and dark, but she can throw a very

roguish expression into them when she pleases. As a parlour-companion, we have a small and very beautiful Blenheim spaniel, the property of Mr. R——, who has two others of the same breed. These dogs used to spend a short time in the country alternately, but little Minna's beauty and engaging manners have so endeared her to me, that her master now allows her to be our constant guest. We are fast friends, and she generally expects some milk from my saucer at breakfast and tea-time.

Boats are continually crossing from our side of the water to the town, but the quarantine regulations do not allow them to ply after sunset. The distance from our house is about half a mile, but the fare is very low, only one halfpenny for each passenger when there are as many as four, and if fewer than

four are in the boat, they must pay twopence between them. When the water is smooth enough to allow of a landing, we may cross over for half the above sum by walking to the point at Fort Tigné. But though these are the established fares, the boatmen are frequently in the habit of demanding a great deal more when they think their passengers are strangers. We thought ourselves rather clever in engaging a boat for a shilling, the first time we crossed over to Sliema.

Though this neighbourhood is rather more pleasant than any part of Malta we have hitherto visited, the land-views present a most desolate appearance to the eyes of those who have been accustomed to the refreshing verdure of our own island. The country is everywhere divided by rough, disfiguring, mortarless stone-walls, into small

irregularly-shaped inclosures, containing from one or two acres to half an acre, and frequently having no gate or doorway, so that the only means of entrance is by climbing over the low wall. In many of these fields there are large patches of bare rock, indeed, there appears to be but a very thin covering of soil in any part, and it is said, that a great deal of this has been brought over from Sicily and from the coast of Africa. But the inhabitants of this little freestone rock are most industrious cultivators of the soil, and raise crops of corn and vegetables, which appear very green and flourishing, notwithstanding the small depth of earth in which they grow. In order to prevent this most precious soil from being washed away by the rain, on the sides of the hills the walls are placed so close together that the ground between them is entirely concealed from an

observer on the plain, and at a little distance he might suppose that he had a barren rock before him. From an eminence, however, the prospect is more verdant and agreeable.

We often take long rambles along the coast and into the interior, and in these excursions we never confine ourselves to roads or footways, but climb over walls, and pass through fields and gardens without rebuke or molestation from any person, as though the island were our own private estate. The Maltese are certainly very goodnatured to trespassers, for though in these cross-country rambles we are continually falling in with men at their work, no notice is ever taken of us. In one of our first excursions in this neighbourhood, we were delighted by finding some beautiful large blue anemones, the same species as those we cultivate with so much care in our English gardens. We

have since found them in great abundance in other places, and have preserved many specimens. Those which are not fully expanded preserve their colours better than most flowers, but the full-blown blossoms invariably become brown when dry. A very curious plant which also grows wild here, is the *momordica elaterium*, or squirting cucumber, from which the drug *elaterium* is obtained. The leaves and flowers are not unlike those of a common gourd, but the fruit, which grows on an upright stalk, and is about the size of a small walnut, has a very singular property, which to a stranger is rather startling. When these little gourds are nearly ripe, the slightest touch causes them to fly with violence from their stems, and at the same time they squirt out their seeds and a quantity of juice to the distance of several yards. The unripe gourds will bear



to be roughly handled without performing this extraordinary feat; but even these will generally squirt out their juice upon being punctured with a knife. Some of these little gourds, which were laid on our table, startled us several days afterwards, by shooting their seeds and juice across the room against the window.

The greatest ornament of the uncultivated parts on the coast is the *asphodelus ramosus*, an English garden plant, which grows luxuriantly among the rocks wherever it can find nourishment for its roots. Some of these plants are three or four feet high, and have several hundred light-pink blossoms; on these we find two or three species of beetles of the genus *scarabæus*,\* and a pretty little *cerambyx*,\* the larva of which inhabits the stem of the

\* Linnean genera.





*Arum Arisarum*

plant. In the same rocky situations the medicinal squill, *scilla maritima*, grows in great abundance, but it is not now in flower, and, I believe, will not blossom till the autumn. The root, which is generally partly above the ground, is four or five inches in diameter, and has somewhat the appearance of an onion.

Our most productive collecting-ground is a place called Coradino, a rough uncultivated spot, at the upper end of the Grand Harbour, and here we find a beautiful many-flowered narcissus, with a powerful and most delicious scent; an orchis, like the bee-orchis, and a very small arum of which I send you a drawing; we have since found this pretty little flower in many other situations. I have also endeavoured to make a drawing of the true maidenhair, which grows here abundantly on damp rocks and walls,

but it is so difficult to do justice to this beautiful fern by representing a single branch, however correctly it may be sketched and coloured, that I have thrown aside my drawing in disgust. To have an idea of its elegant growth it must be seen on its native rocks. At the point at Fort Tigné there grows a henbane, which differs from the English species in not having the beautiful pencilling on the flowers; the scent also is not quite so offensive. On the asphodelus and on the squill we sometimes find a species of dodder, (*cuscuta* ———) a parasitical plant, which appears like an assemblage of red tendrils sticking fast to the leaves, and deriving its nourishment from them. A small species of valerian, the blue pimpernel, (*anagallis cerulea*), the *clypeola maritima*, the *silene gallica*, and a marigold no larger than a daisy, are common in every

field and by every roadside. There are also three or four pretty species of antirrhinum and of orchis. We are very desirous of seeing the flowers of some plants which are not yet in blossom; among these are several thistles, marbled with white, and one with the leaves finely divided, like those of a fern; one or two sorts of iris; an arum, with very large singularly-formed leaves, and the caper-plant. This last is common on the walls of the fortifications, and is not unlike the periwinkle in growth.

Let me mention three more plants, and we will leave this subject for the present. The first is a very beautiful large yellow oxalis, which is sometimes cultivated in pots in England; the second, a fine deep crimson vetch; and the third, a rough-leaved plant, with the flowers purple and yellow. At first I thought this was a species of com-



frey, to which it is certainly very nearly allied, but I have since been informed that it is the *cerinthe aspera*. It is an exceedingly beautiful plant, and preserves its colour and character very well when dry.

I believe you did not see the net which I brought out for the purpose of collecting shells. It is on the same principle as an oyster dredge, but it is smaller, and consists of a sharp iron scraper, to which is attached a bag made of strong net-work. It is let down to the bottom from a boat, and as it is dragged slowly along, the shells or other small things lying in its way are scraped up and transferred to the net, where they remain till the apparatus is hauled up into the boat again. I had hoped to have procured a great many shells in this manner, but I am sorry to say that we have met with very little success, though we have

made many trials in some bays on the coast, which are well suited for dredging, having a fine sandy bottom, quite free from rocks or other obstructions.

But though we have hitherto met with but little success in dredging, the hopes of obtaining some shells by this means has induced us to visit several parts of the coast, which we should not otherwise have seen. We had one very pleasant water excursion to St. Paul's Bay, which is generally supposed to be the spot where St. Paul was shipwrecked.

I believe that few persons now entertain any doubt that Malta is the ancient Melita mentioned in the Acts ; one or two writers on this subject have, however, contended that St. Paul was shipwrecked on an island now called *Meleda*, which is situated in the Gulf of Venice, on the coast of Dalmatia.

Therefore, before I give you an account of our excursion to St. Paul's Bay, I will insert a few arguments, which I have collected from various sources, in opposition to this opinion. The principal advocate in favour of Meleda, is that learned and indefatigable inquirer, Jacob Bryant. He has been followed by Dr. Falconer, but I have never seen the observations of the latter writer, and I believe they are little more than a repetition of the arguments of Bryant.

I have read these with the greatest attention. The principal and most plausible argument is founded on this passage in the Acts, "We were driven up and down in *Adria*," and Bryant contends that by this term we must understand that portion of the Mediterranean only which is now called the Gulf of Venice, and which does not extend

so far to the south as Malta by two or three hundred miles.

Such, no doubt, were the confined limits assigned to the Adriatic by many ancient geographers ; but even those authorities quoted by Bryant differ from each other considerably in the exact boundary they have fixed for this sea. By some it was considered to comprehend the greater portion of the Ionian Gulf, and one authority states, that it was included between Italy and the opposite coast of Greece. Bryant allows that the limits assigned to the Adriatic have varied at different periods. And as a complete refutation of this learned man's grand argument, it has been proved from Ptolemy, Strabo, and others, that the Adriatic Sea was sometimes allowed to include the whole of the space between Italy, Greece, and Africa.

Bryant's second argument also rests upon a single word in the account of the shipwreck. It is said, "the *barbarous* people showed us no little kindness." Jacob very clearly proves from Cicero and from Diodorus Siculus, that at the time in question the inhabitants of Malta were by no means a "barbarous people."

St. Paul himself has furnished us with an answer to this argument in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xiv. ver. 11: "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." Now there is no doubt that at the time of the shipwreck the inhabitants of Melita, who were of Phœnician and Carthaginian origin, still retained wholly, or in part, their ancient language, which would be unintelligible to Greeks and Romans. The

shipwrecked company would “know not the meaning of the voice ;” and, consequently, those who made use of it would be called by them a “barbarous people.”

I am almost afraid to venture upon Bryant’s next argument, not that there is any difficulty in refuting it, but because the reply to it may, perhaps, give offence to some persons. It is confidently asserted, and I believe the statement is quite correct, that no viper, or other poisonous snake is to be found in Malta ; therefore Bryant says, “As there are no serpents now, my conclusion is, that there never were any ; consequently this could not be the place where St. Paul exhibited the miracle.”

The present inhabitants of Malta have a very ready answer to this. They assert, that when St. Paul “shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm,” he at the same instant



destroyed all the venomous snakes in the island. But instead of believing that Malta was freed from poisonous reptiles in this manner, is it not more rational to conclude that St. Paul *wrought no miracle whatever* upon the occasion, and that the animal which fastened upon his hand was not a "venomous beast," but a harmless snake? The English snake is still believed to be venomous by many of our own countrymen, especially by the ignorant and superstitious Welchmen, some of whom I have found it quite impossible to convince, when I have taken the animal into my hands, that I did not possess some supernatural power or *charm*, which prevented it from injuring me. "Ah, he knows *you*," they have said; "but I would not touch him for the world!" We may safely conclude that the company assembled round the fire after the shipwreck were

equally deficient in a knowledge of natural history. St. Paul himself was no doubt mistaken in the nature of the animal which had attacked him. We know that many wonderful miracles were wrought by him, but he was not *omniscient*. Though a messenger from heaven had been sent to assure him that the lives of himself and his shipmates would be saved, St. Paul knew not the land on which they should be wrecked. "Howbeit, we must be cast on a *certain* island."

Jacob Bryant makes some further observations on this subject, which are rather amusing. He says, that if we allow Meleda, the island in the Gulf of Venice, to be the scene of the shipwreck, the course taken by St. Paul and his companions on their way to Rome, after they had wintered in the island, is easily to be accounted for. From what follows, we might suppose that Bryant had

had an opportunity of consulting the log-book of the good ship the *Castor and Pollux*. He asks what wind a vessel would require in going from Meleda towards Rome, and replies, "a child with a chart before him would tell you it must be a wind from the north." He then goes on to say, that as a north wind was unfavourable for the Straits of Messina, the vessel was compelled either to "beat the seas, or make to some port." Accordingly they put into Syracuse. After three days, however, a side-wind fortunately sprung up, (Bryant has omitted to tell us whether it blew from the east or from the west,) and carried the ship into Regium.

On the other hand, if the *Castor and Pollux* sailed from Malta, Bryant confesses himself altogether puzzled and baffled in his attempts to account for her subsequent course. And why? Simply because the historian of

these most interesting voyages has not thought it necessary to inform us of the *cause* of their detention at Syracuse.\* Bryant accordingly pronounces the whole account to be "very unsatisfactory, not to say unintelligible," and he declares that he can see "no reason for their stay at Syracuse, nor for their taking such a circuit to get to Rhegium." But "the child with a chart before him," just now brought forward by Bryant, would have informed him that Syracuse lies *directly in the track* of a vessel sailing from Malta to Rhegium. And it is easy to imagine many reasons which might have induced them to put into Syracuse; as tempestuous weather, or a wish to land or take on board passengers or cargo.

Several circumstances might be brought forward to show that it is highly improbable that St. Paul was shipwrecked on Meleda.

Bryant himself has furnished us with one argument. In his eagerness to establish the fact that the inhabitants of Malta were not a barbarous people, while those of Meleda richly deserved this appellation, he goes rather further than he intended. He proves that the latter were such atrocious pirates and robbers, that the Romans had found it necessary in self-defence to attack the island, and had destroyed nearly all the inhabitants. Now we cannot believe that the remnant of these piratical wretches would have treated the poor half-drowned company with such kindness and hospitality; on the contrary, there can be no doubt that they would have murdered them as soon as they landed for the sake of their clothes, or any goods that might be recovered from the wreck; for in whatever place the vessel was cast on shore, it is evident that the crew were first disco-



vered, and kindly sheltered by the *natives*, “the barbarous people,” so called by the historian, because they spoke an unknown language.

I shall only add, that the present inhabitants of Malta most firmly and zealously believe that their island has been honoured by a visit from the apostle. They have even dedicated a church to *St. Publius*, who, according to their tradition, was made a bishop by St. Paul, as a reward for his hospitality; and the Maltese assert, that since that time the island has never been without a Christian bishop.

Having now, I trust, quite convinced you that Malta is indeed the Melita mentioned in the Acts, we will visit that part of the island, which the unvarying tradition of the inhabitants, and the form of the coast, point out as the exact spot where the shipwreck took place.

We set off on our expedition to St. Paul's



Bay at seven in the morning in a boat, with four men and our servant Michele, who appeared delighted to accompany us. As we coasted along the shore, we had an opportunity of seeing that this part of the island had all the same desolate appearance as the country in the neighbourhood of Valetta. The disfiguring stone walls intersected the land in every direction, and the low rocky shore made the view very tame and uninteresting. On almost every projecting headland we observed small square forts, or watch-towers, which are garrisoned by a few Maltese soldiers, stationed there to give the alarm in case of an invasion, and to prevent people from landing from vessels which have not performed quarantine.

When we arrived at the bay we crossed over to the little island of Selmone, on which we endeavoured to land; but find-

ing it impossible to effect this without endangering our boat, we at last, with some difficulty, got on shore on the main land on the rocky point, where it is believed that the unfortunate "ship of Alexandria" finished her last voyage. Those who have investigated the subject affirm, that there is no other part of Malta which will agree with the description given in the Acts, but that here, during a *Euroclydon*, which is supposed to have been a violent gale of wind from the north, or north-east quarter, there is a heavy swell, rushing round each side of Selmone, and forming, indeed, a place where two seas meet in the narrow channel, which separates the island from the main land. The bay is about seven miles north-west from Valetta, and is rather more than a mile wide, and about two deep, appearing from the sea like the mouth of a large

river, and it is therefore a place where, supposing it to be a secure haven, any tempest-tost mariner would be glad to take refuge. Selmone may be about half-a-mile in length, and does not appear as an island till you have advanced some distance into the bay.

On these rocks we remained some time, meditating on the beautiful narrative of the voyage, and thinking that, perhaps, covered by the boiling sea beneath our feet, there still existed some fragment of the ship, which eighteen hundred years ago was here "broken with the violence of the waves." We collected some pieces of the rock, which we preserved, both as memorials of the spot, and as specimens of Maltese stone for the cabinets of our mineralogical friends at home. On the hill, just above the point, we found some very pretty little blue flowers, which we had not seen

in blossom before, though the leaves are abundant in the neighbourhood of Sliema. I believe this plant is a species of *ixia*.

As we had sent our boat round to meet us in a little cove about a mile distant, we now walked along the north-west side of the bay, searching for plants and other treasures, but we found nothing very valuable, except a pretty species of heath, and a stock with a pink flower, but having scarcely any scent. A milk-white snail-shell (*helix candidissima*) was very abundant here, but we could not find a single specimen which had the animal alive in it, or as a conchologist would say, they were all *dead shells*. After making a totally unsuccessful attempt with the dredge, we rowed to the bottom of the bay, where we again landed, and visited a large thriving plantation of young mulberry-trees, which had been planted for the purpose of feeding

silkworms. In the spaces between the trees the cotton-shrub was growing. It has much the appearance of a currant-bush, but at this season of the year has neither leaves nor blossoms. We climbed over the low wall of the plantation to gather a few dead cotton-pods that were still remaining on some of the shrubs, not supposing them to be of any value to the owner ; but this was an offence which even Maltese civility could not tolerate, and a man at a distance expressed his disapprobation in a very angry tone.

From the plantation we walked along the south-shore to the spot which has been fixed upon by Maltese imagination as that where St. Paul first preached on the island. Here is a rough monument, on which is a small image, and underneath is this inscription :  
“ *Omnes gentes venient et glorificabunt nomen tuum.* Psal. lxxxvi. A.D. MDCCXXV.”



At the foot of the monument is a spring of water, which is attributed to the miraculous agency of the apostle. A little further along the coast is St. Paul's Tower, a strong square building, with a ditch and a drawbridge, and inhabited by seven or eight soldiers.

We now re-embarked, and after enjoying a "good, honest, wholesome, hungry repast," we once more threw the dredge overboard, but having towed it in various directions across the bay, and obtained nothing but weeds, we crossed over to the other side, and dredged in the narrow channel between Selmone and the mainland, in the spot where some of the more imperishable parts of the wreck may possibly still be in existence. And here we fished up from the bottom—what do you think? an ancient Roman coin, or a rust-devoured helmet or breastplate? No such thing, only a few small



pebbles, which we added to our stock of relics.

But if this be really the spot where the ship was wrecked, and of this I have no doubt from all I have heard or read upon the subject, is it altogether impossible that by descending in a diving-bell some part of her might be discovered? A vessel large enough to have carried "two hundred three-score and sixteen souls" must have had very heavy anchors and other articles of metal, and though these may long ago have been entirely reduced to the state of oxide, I believe it possible that they may still be in existence in that form. A portion of the woodwork even may have been preserved by being embedded in the sand.

On our way homewards, we made trials with the dredge in several places, but met with no success. We landed in St. Mark's

Bay, and by wading in the shallow water, we found a few small shells, and some beautiful *echini* or sea-eggs, with long green and purple spines. These sea-eggs are eaten by some persons, but I have not courage to taste them. It is dangerous to wade without shoes in places where they abound, for the spines run into the feet, and breaking off, cannot be extracted without great difficulty. There have been instances of persons losing their limbs in this manner. We here met with an old man who was catching eels by dropping a baited hook into the holes and crevices among the rocks close to the shore, and in order to see the bottom more clearly, he had recourse to the ingenious contrivance of sprinkling on the water a few drops of oil, which had the effect of making the surface perfectly smooth in an instant. The eels he caught were large,

disgusting, spotted, snake-like creatures, but I have since found, that when properly cooked they make a most delicious dish. From St. Mark's Bay we proceeded directly homewards, for our want of success was so discouraging that we made no further use of our dredge on that day.

We sometimes obtain a few cowries, (*cypræa lurida*,) as large as a walnut, and some other shells, by a process called "clamping," which has proved a more successful method of collecting than dredging. Clamps are a sort of strong iron pincers or tongs, which the boatmen lower down to the bottom with ropes, and by this means draw up large stones for the sake of the oysters adhering to them, and the large boring shells, (*lithodomus dactylus*) by which they are perforated. The animals of the latter are esteemed a great delicacy.

The shells of the oysters (*spondylus gædopus*) are ornamented with beautiful pink spines, and the animals are of a reddish colour, but are inferior in flavour to those caught on the English coast. Clamping can only be performed when the water is smooth, as it is necessary to see the bottom distinctly, in order to fix the instruments properly to the stones, but when the surface is only slightly ruffled by a breeze, the method adopted by the eel-fisherman will render it as smooth as a mirror. The surprising effect produced by a few drops of oil is well known to the Maltese fishermen, and by this means we are enabled to see distinctly to the depth of twenty or thirty feet, for the water in these seas is almost as transparent as air; much more transparent, indeed, than the atmosphere of London at certain seasons of the year. We find that

we can see the bottom much more clearly by leaning over the gunwale of the boat so as to bring the eyes within an inch or two of the surface of the water. While in this position, however, the observer of the beautiful submarine view should caution his companions not to change their places suddenly, or a complete immersion of his face will be the consequence. On the stones which we draw up with the clamps, we sometimes find small branches of red coral, (*eschara truncata*,) but the colour soon fades by exposure to the air. We sometimes bring home half a boat-load of the larger stones and break them to pieces, by which means we obtain several species of boring-shells and other marine animals. In the holes in the stones we find a very curious little crab, which has the power of striking a smart blow when taken

into the hand, making at the same time a snapping noise, which it repeats several times after being put into a bottle of spirits of wine. I have not yet ascertained how this feat is performed, but probably the animal is furnished with an apparatus similar to that by which beetles of the genus *elater*, spring up when laid on their backs.

In St. Julian's Bay we have found a few specimens of the *trochus margaritaceus*, a pretty little shell with a pearly mouth. These shells are confined to a very small part of the pebbly beach, beyond which it is in vain to seek for them, neither have we been able to find them on any other part of the coast.

We have been very successful in our search for chitons, and have collected several hundred specimens of five or six different species: some of them are more than an



inch and a half in length. After finding these monsters I fear I shall despise the small English chitons we used to search for with so much interest. I have made a drawing of two of the largest species, (*chiton siculus*,) to show how much they differ from each other in colour and markings. No. 1 is the most common variety, but the smaller and more prettily marked specimen is occasionally found. It is singular that the two sides of the same individual almost always differ from each other. To obtain these chitons, I wade in the water where it is about two feet deep, and turn over the stones, on the underside of which they are found sticking fast, like limpets. To preserve them properly requires some care, for if not prevented, they immediately curl up when removed from the stones, and it will be found impossible to straighten them again without injuring them. We



1



2



1 *Chiton Siculus*

2 *Bulimus decollatus*



therefore immediately tie them down to flat strips of wood, and having killed them with hot water, we keep them in that position till they are nearly dry and stiff. We then take them off, and carefully scrape out the fleshy part underneath, after which we gum them down on stiff pasteboard, to prevent the thin outside edge or margin from being broken. This excellent method of preserving chitons was communicated to me by Mr. Stuchbury, of the Bristol Philosophical Institution.

I take so much interest in searching for our favourite chitons, that I sometimes remain up to my knees in the water for four or five hours at a time. It is cold work for the hands and feet certainly, and by handling the rough stones, the tips of the fingers become very sore, and sometimes even bleed from the skin being worn through. When in this state, the salt-water is not a very soothing

application. Gloves of any kind, when saturated with water, are a great incumbrance. I have procured two pieces of thick leather, like those which bricklayers sometimes use in wet weather, to prevent the skin of their fingers from being worn away by the bricks, but I have not yet made trial of my protectors.

Should you be acquainted with any collector about to visit Malta, he may be glad to be informed that an excellent place for finding chitons, indeed by far the best that we have discovered, is in the quarantine harbour, close to the road leading from the island on which the lazaret stands, to the village of Sliema. The water here is about two feet deep, and the bottom is covered with large loose stones, on which will be found chitons of several species, and one kind (*c. siculus*) in great abundance. On

these stones we also find a very pretty species of *haliotis*, or sea-ear, a curious limpet, (*fissurella*,) with a hole at the apex, and several other shells and marine curiosities. If the constitution of the collector will not allow him to wade in the water, any of the boatmen will be happy to wait on him for a trifling reward; but in this case he had better himself remove the chitons from the stones, which operation should be very carefully performed with a thin, but blunt knife, to avoid injuring the outside edge or margin.

After wading in the water for several hours, it is very delightful to put on dry clothes, and to spend the remainder of the day by the fire-side, examining the contents of our baskets and boxes, preparing chitons, and extracting the animals from the shells. The last operation often gives us a great deal of trouble, especially with the animals of some



of the land-shells, which contract so when killed by hot water, that it is almost impossible to extract them. Indeed, we do not attempt to do so with the smaller shells, but we put them out of doors in a plate till the smell is gone off. I have found that a weak solution of the arseniated soap, used for preserving birds' skins, diminishes the odour greatly.

If you had the power of looking in upon us without warning, I fear you would be shocked at the untidy state of our apartment. It is in an especial muddle at the present moment. Several tables are covered with paper trays of shells, or bottles of insects, lizards, and marine animals; and even that on which I am writing is strewed over with the refuse of plants, while at the other end is my indefatigable companion, with two basins before him nearly filled with the ani-

mals he has been extracting from some snails. In one corner of the room is an apparatus for pressing plants, consisting of two large boards, and a great rough stone for a weight. In another corner lies a confused heap of flat sticks and tangled string, used for tying down chitons, and on the mantelpiece is a collection of tin boxes of various forms and sizes, with other collecting apparatus. To complete the picture, dear little Minna, who is reposing by my side with her head in my lap, has jumped up without having taken the precaution of wiping her muddy feet, of which she has left several exact impressions on the white sofa-cover. Poor Michele does his best to keep things in order; but in a short time the room is as untidy as ever again, and I wonder he does not give up the attempt in despair.

A week or two ago I had the pleasure

of meeting my old and valued friend, Lieutenant B——, who came into this port from the Levant in his noble ship the *Britannia*. On the day she arrived we had set out for a ramble along the coast to St. George's Bay, but had no sooner mounted the rising ground at the back of our house, than casting our eyes seaward, we saw a grand spectacle, which entirely altered our plans for that morning. At the distance of about a mile from the land was the *Britannia*, followed by several other large ships, majestically standing in for the harbour's mouth, with a light breeze, just sufficient to fill their white canvass. Having returned to the house, and hastily effected a slight change in our costume, we ran to Fort Tigné, and crossed over to Valetta, just in time to see the ships enter the Grand Harbour. We had hoped that the Admiral's ship and some of the batteries in the town

would have exchanged salutes, but not a gun was fired on either side.

A few days after their arrival I had the pleasure of half-an-hour's conversation with B—— at the Porlatorio, on the other side of the Grand Harbour; for as the ships came from an unhealthy country, they had to perform a fortnight's quarantine; and on the day they received *pratique*, I spent a very pleasant morning on board the *Britannia*, over which I was kindly conducted by Lieutenant B——. Nothing could exceed the beautiful order and cleanliness of every part of this immense floating battery; and I was particularly pleased with the kindness of my friend's manner, when he had occasion to reprove one or two of the men for some slight neglect of their duty. Indeed, I believe it is principally owing to his good government, in which the greatest firmness

is tempered with kindness and attention to the comforts of the crew, that the *Britannia* is considered to be one of the best regulated, and most orderly ships in his Majesty's service.

We retired to B——'s comfortable little state-room, and spent some time in looking over his sketch-book, which contained several interesting views of scenes he had recently visited. Turning over the leaves, my attention was suddenly attracted by an old rubbed pencil-drawing, which seemed, I knew not why, to carry my thoughts home to my native land in an instant. I said to B——, "I surely know this place!" "It would be a very poor compliment to the skill of the artist if you did not," replied he, "for it is a sketch I made some years ago near your sister's cottage, in the beautiful valley at H——."

I cannot describe my sensations at thus unexpectedly meeting with this well-known scene in a foreign land; and for the remainder of that day my thoughts were more than usually directed towards home and distant friends.



## LETTER V.

*Sliema, March 1st, 1834.*

OUR friend, Dr. —, inquires, whether Malta would be a suitable winter residence for those invalids who require a warmer temperature than can be secured in any part of England. An opinion of the climate, founded on an experience of three months only, will not be of much value, and we have been too much engaged to pay very close attention to the subject, for, except in very wet weather, almost all our hours of daylight have been occupied in endeavouring, by the utmost diligence in collecting, to compensate in some degree for the ex-

treme unproductiveness of this island in natural curiosities.

I am informed by those who have resided here for some years, that the winter has been rather milder than usual. Our short and very imperfect observations on the weather, will be found at the end of this letter. The height of the thermometer has been noted at eight o'clock in the morning, and though a later hour in the day would, perhaps, have been preferable, the uncertainty of our being at home at that time would have occasioned a much greater number of omissions in this column than it already contains.

But this register certainly presents much too favourable a view of the climate; for to our feelings the changes in the temperature have occasionally been painfully sudden, while the variation has appeared very much greater than the thermometer has indicated, and had

that been consulted at a later hour in the day, I believe that the result of our observations would have been very different. I can imagine no sort of weather more injurious to an invalid with weak lungs than the sudden alterations of temperature we were exposed to a few days ago in the streets of Valetta. It is well even for the sound lungs that such days do not often occur. The sky was perfectly clear and cloudless, and the heat of the sun in sheltered situations quite oppressive, while at the same time a bitterly cold wind was blowing from the north or north-west, so that when we turned the corner of a street, and were exposed to its influence, we seemed to pass at once from the usual temperature of an English June to the piercing blasts of December. However, we have not had more than six or seven days of this distressing weather dur-

ing the winter. At such times invalids should not upon any account venture to leave the house, where they will probably suffer no injury from the effects of this piercing wind, as its temperature is not in reality so low as those who are exposed to it might suppose.

In justice to this disagreeable little free-stone rock, I must mention among “the qualities o’ the isle,” two inducements which it offers to invalids to choose it for their hibernacula. These are, first, that it can boast of a beautifully clear and apparently a very dry atmosphere ; and, secondly, that excellent accommodation can be obtained on moderate terms. In Valetta there are several very well-conducted hotels, where may be enjoyed every English comfort and luxury, and invalids in a foreign land will surely not esteem it the least of these, that when

confined to the house they can sit by their fireside and feel the invigorating warmth of English coal. Though my companion has ceased to consider himself an invalid, and does not appear to have any disease remaining, we have indulged ourselves with the luxury of a cheerful fire almost every day since we left the lazaret, and the evenings have been so cool, that it was quite necessary.

I had looked forward with some pleasure to the carnival, but the rain and the wind very soon put a stop to the amusements. It began on Sunday, the 9th of last month, and, if the weather had permitted, would have continued for three days. As I came home from church in the morning, I saw several odd masks parading the streets of Valetta, both on horseback and on foot, some with heads like parrots, dogs, and

pigs, and large quantities of imitation sugar-plums, made of lime or plaster of Paris, and of various colours, were exposed for sale. These are used as missiles in the harmless warfare, which must, I think, be the most amusing part of the proceedings.

The next day we had a tremendous gale of wind from the north-east, accompanied with heavy and nearly incessant rain. A gale of wind from this quarter is here called “a gregale,” and as it is believed to be synonymous with the euroclydon, it was quite in character with the day, (February 10th,) which is kept by the Maltese as the anniversary of St. Paul’s shipwreck, though it is impossible to determine the exact time of the event from the account in the Acts; indeed, it is supposed to have happened in the latter end of October. Sugar-plum



pelting, and parading the streets in masks, are very childish amusements for men and women to partake in; but it is so delightful to see people thoroughly enjoying themselves, that I could not help feeling for the bitter disappointment of the carnival revellers, especially of the lower orders, many of whom are said to save up their money for some weeks before, to enable them to buy or hire a dress for the occasion.

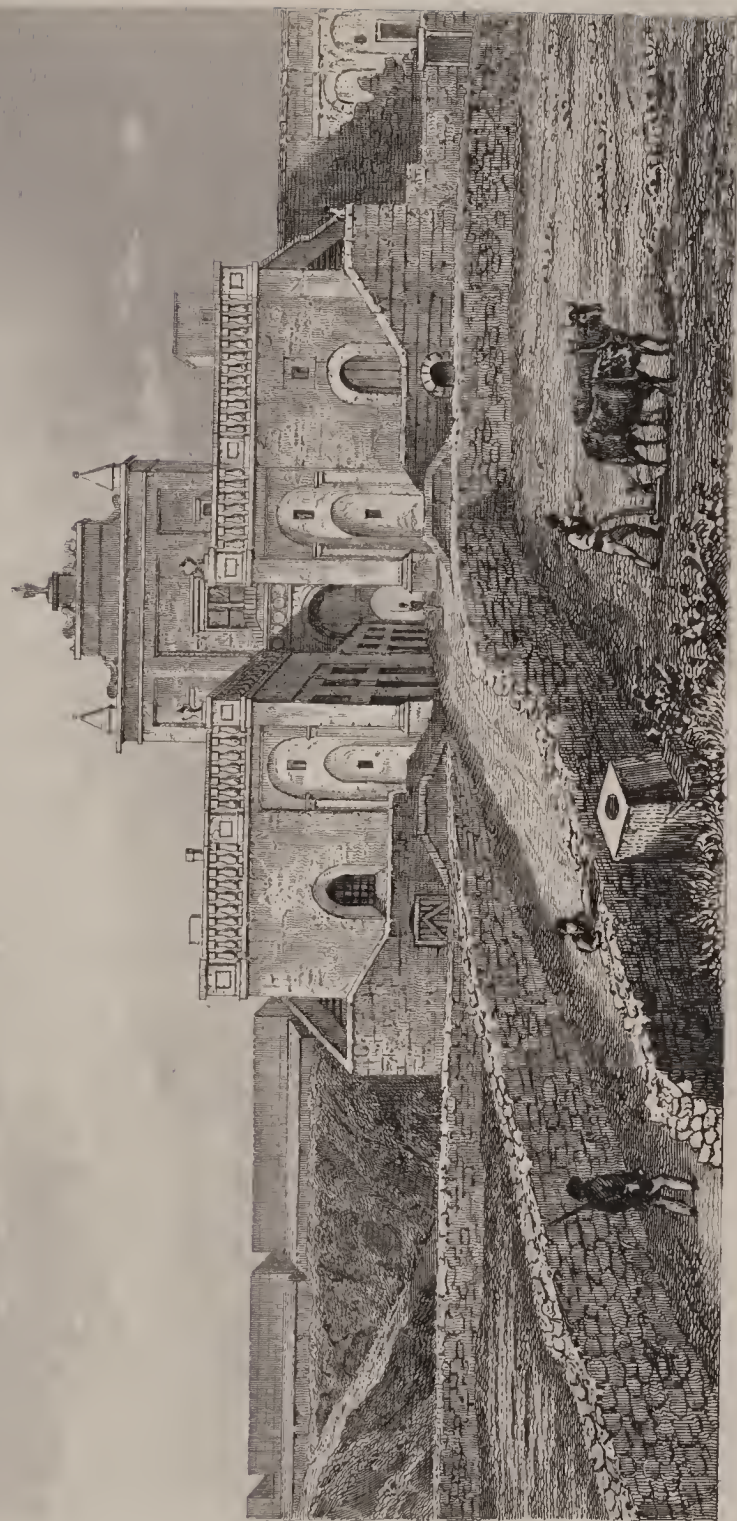
In the morning I went with our friend, Mr. N——, to St. Paul's Church, where there was a grand festa, as it is called. Here we heard some good music and singing, after which a learned monk delivered a discourse in Italian, which my companion informed me was a narration of St. Paul's arrival on the island, and of the conversion of the inhabitants to Christianity. The gale was so violent, and there was so much swell

in the harbour when I crossed over from Sliema in the morning, that it was as much as four men could do to pull across; and on returning to the waterside about noon, I was informed that it was no longer safe to make the attempt, so I was obliged to walk round to Sliema, a distance of four or five miles in the soaking rain.

The gale continued all the next day, with increasing violence, but with less rain. Nothing could exceed the grandeur of the scene at the point beyond Fort Tigné, where, from the violence of the wind, it was almost impossible to stand without some shelter or support. The heavy seas dashing against the opposite point of St. Elmo, appeared to rise in the air at least a hundred feet. During the gale the atmosphere was so thick and hazy, that it was impossible to distinguish any object at the distance of more

than a mile or two. While we were at the point sheltering ourselves behind a wall, we perceived, through the mist a small Greek brig, with scarcely any sail set, driving rapidly before the wind towards the land. For some time we were in great anxiety for her safety, for the entrance to the harbour is very narrow, and had she missed it, no earthly power could have saved the lives of those on board. In a few minutes, however, she scudded quickly past the point, and we soon had the pleasure of seeing her securely moored near the lazaret.

Towards evening the gale abated a little, and the next day we had fine pleasant weather again, with a gentle breeze from the westward. We went over to the town in the morning, having heard that some damage had been occasioned in the Grand Harbour



ZABAR GATE.





by the gale of the two preceding days. We found that the St. Vincent, three-decker, had parted from her moorings, and was aground at the upper end of the harbour; but it was expected that she would be got off again without much damage. A brig, of between one and two hundred tons, was driven on shore near the custom-house, and was lying on her beam-ends, and a smaller vessel was aground near her. The boats and small craft in the harbour had also suffered a great deal, and the large stones on the wharf near the Nix Mangiare Stairs had been torn up in an extraordinary manner. In the afternoon we walked to St. Julian's Bay, where we found that a large mass of rock, several tons in weight, round which we used to find the *trochus margaritaceus*, had been turned over and washed up much higher on the beach. During these gales the light spray



of the sea drives over the country like fine rain, and as far as it reaches produces a sad effect on vegetation, especially on the peas and beans, which become black and withered. We passed a field of beans a mile or two inland, which had suffered greatly from this salt sprinkling, and it is sometimes felt as far as Citta Vecchia, which cannot be less than five miles from the sea.

Since my last letter we have continued our dredging operations, but have met with very little encouragement. I am almost ashamed to make any more attempts, for I can see that even our boatmen are amused at our want of success. We have obtained permission of the superintendent of quarantine to dredge in the harbour opposite our house; but after having scraped the bottom over thoroughly from one end to the other, we have added only a few insignificant

shells to our small collection. We often find in our net some curious animals of the genus *holothuria*: they are of a dark brown colour, and in appearance are not unlike large kidney potatoes. They are certainly very low in the scale of existence, for the only proof they give of possessing animal life is a slow twisting motion; and on dissection, they are found to consist of an exceedingly tough thick skin, the contents of which leather-bag are chiefly water and sand. But though their skin is so hard, they have the power of fitting themselves exactly into any inequality of the surface, and when laid in a basket, they soon become indented with an impression of the wicker-work, which appearance continues for some time after they are removed. Some of these singular creatures are seven or eight inches in length, and nearly as thick as a man's wrist.

They are very disagreeable in appearance, and though not easily affected by such operations, I found the dissection of a very large *holothuria* the most disgusting job I had ever been engaged in. Animals of this genus, and very similar in appearance to those I have described, are a common article of food with the Chinese. They are found in great numbers on the shores of some of the South Sea Islands, where they are collected and salted, and the demand is so considerable, that many vessels are employed in the trade.

Having heard that shells were to be found in a bay, called Marsa Scala, which lies three or four miles south-east of Valetta, one morning before sunrise we set off in a boat for a long day's excursion. We dredged for some time in Marsa Scala and in St. Thomas's Bay, but found no shells; and .

then, by the advice of our boatmen, we proceeded to Marsa Scirocco, at the southeastern end of the island, passing between Cape Delimara and the Ittactia Rock. After passing the Cape we encountered a fresh westerly breeze, with a short disagreeable sea, which made us glad to pull into the bottom of the bay for shelter. Here we landed, and after wading in the shallow water for some time, we made another entirely unsuccessful attempt with the dredge. Tired of this employment, and pinched with the cold wind, we sailed back along the coast to a sheltered cove, near St. Thomas's Bay, where we dined. As it was a fast-day, neither our boatmen nor Michele would eat any meat, but they made a meal of bread and cheese and anchovies, which fish are so cheap here, that they are a common article of food with the lower orders. Here we

met with a few specimens of the little pearly-mouthed shell, the *trochus margaritaceus*.

Near this cove is a remarkable cavern, into which we rowed our boat for seventy or eighty yards, when we could perceive a glimmering of daylight at the end of a narrow passage to the right, but the roof was so low that we could proceed no further in that direction. What appeared to be the principal branch turned off to the left, and had we been provided with lights, I should have been glad to have explored it further. I took no measure of the dimensions, but the average width might be about twenty feet, and the height from eight to twelve, and the water appeared to be of great depth all the way. Our boatmen had never entered this cavern before, supposing that it extended only a few yards. The coast from St.

Thomas's Bay to Marsa Scirocco is of a much bolder character than any part we have seen; some of the cliffs appeared to be from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet in height.

We were several hours rowing back to Sliema, against a piercing north-west wind. Miserably cold, and wet, and hungry, we were glad to take refuge at last in our comfortable home, and to enjoy the consolations of dry clothes, a blazing fire, and a plentiful meal.

I am heartily weary of this dull tideless sea! An occasional exposure of a muddy shore even would be almost as agreeable as this total stagnation of the water, for here the collector of marine curiosities has no opportunity of searching for treasures left by the retreating waves. I cannot account for the scarcity of shells on this coast; those



we collect ourselves are small and not very beautiful, but we have bought a few tolerably fine shells of the fishermen, who occasionally find them in the baskets which they sink to the bottom for the purpose of catching crabs. These crab-pots are always set on rocky ground, where it is impossible to use a dredge, and as we can obtain very few shells on the sandy bottom, I conclude they prefer the former situation from finding a better supply of food there.

We have been much more successful in our search for land-shells, which I think are rather plentiful on this island. One very curious species, the *bulimus decollatus*, is very common here: the full-grown shells have invariably several of the upper coils broken off, so that they appear imperfect, but the young of this species are not thus mutilated. The little left-handed shell,

(*clausilia tuberculata*,) mentioned in a former letter, is abundant, and so is a very prettily marked snail-shell, which I am informed is the *helix melitensis*, and found only on this island. We have a few specimens of another reversed shell, (*clausilia labiata*,) which is of a very pale brown colour, and deeply striated, or furrowed. On some waste rocky ground, beyond St. George's Bay, we have met with many live specimens of *helix candidissima*, the dead shells of which we had before found at St. Paul's Bay; and in a marshy spot at Coradino, we find the *helix naticoides*, a large semi-transparent amber-coloured shell, with the animal quite black, and appearing a great deal too large for its habitation. To those who are fond of snails, the *h. naticoides* would, I should think, be a very tender and juicy morsel.

We were informed by one of our friends,

the boatmen, that some very large chitons, which he called "*Turk's fruit*," were to be found on the rocks round Fort Manuel, and we therefore applied to the superintendent of quarantine for a pass, without which no one is allowed to cross the bridge, or to land from a boat. We spent a whole morning on the island, and found several new shells, among which were some large trochi; but for chitons, the part of the harbour I have before mentioned is a much better situation. A fisherman lately brought me some "sea-oranges," as they are called; they are found adhering to the sea-weed, and appear to belong to the sponge-tribe. They are composed of a thick outer covering of a deep yellow-colour, and granulated texture, enclosing a fibrous greyish substance, and they have very much the appearance of the fruit from which they are named, though not more than half the size.

Green lizards are very abundant on almost every old wall. We have blow-piped a great many, and several of the kind called wood-slaves: the latter have such tough skins and constitutions, that a pellet of clay, unless discharged from a very short distance, often produces no effect whatever on them; I have therefore adopted the plan of mixing a few small shot with it, which increases the force of the blow greatly. We do not meet with many snakes at this season of the year, but I have several kinds, one of which has very much the appearance of a viper, but on examining his mouth he proves to be quite a harmless species, having no venomous fangs. One day when we were botanizing at Coradino, William saw a large, and nearly black snake, but he had retreated into his hole before I could reach the spot; neither did he think proper to appear again, though we remained

some time in the neighbourhood. Perhaps his instinct taught him that there was an experienced snake-hunter lying in wait for his destruction. I have captured a small snake, probably of the same species, under a stone near our house. An examination of his mouth proved that he was harmless, but he darted his head about in such a threatening manner, that I was afraid to seize him in my hand, not having yet *proved* the truth of the assertion, that there are no venomous snakes in the island, though I fully believe it to be correct.

With the exception of the sandpiper, mentioned in my letter from the lazaret, I have not seen a single bird differing from those of our own country. All kinds of birds are very scarce here, but quails and beccaficos visit the island at certain seasons.

My collection of insects consists chiefly



of the genera *carabus*,\* *curculio*,\* and *scarabæus*.\* I have also several kinds of locusts, and a large brown mantis. We have seen no butterflies differing from the British species. The clouded yellow (*colias edusa*) is very abundant in the neighbourhood of Sliema; but they are so shy and restless, that it is very difficult to catch them: in this respect they resemble all those I have met with in England. The gate-keeper and the large white butterfly are also very plentiful here. The bright colours and perfect wings of these three butterflies, prove that they have come forth from the chrysalis state very recently. We find many small scorpions, which we are told are not venomous, but we trust them not, for they have a sharp sting at the end of their tails; and it is evi-

\* Linnean genera.



dent from the menacing way in which they hold it up over their backs, that whether they can make use of it or not, *they think they can.*

Since my last letter, by the kindness of a young naval officer, Mr. L——, of Sliema, we have been introduced to Dr. Leach, the celebrated entomologist, who is now living at a place called the Pieta, at the head of the quarantine harbour. I had always fancied him to be a pompous old fellow in a great wig; imagine then my surprise on being introduced to a "gentleman between thirty and forty years of age, of remarkably mild and unassuming manners, and appearing quite as anxious to receive information as to communicate it. We have spent several very pleasant mornings at his house, examining the insects he has collected in this island, and in other parts of Europe. This examination

has occupied a great deal of time, and has led to long conversations on the subject of our favourite science, respecting which Dr. Leach has so much information to communicate. The most remarkable of the Maltese insects in his collection were those of the genera *buprestis*,\* *scarabæus*,\* and *mantis*,\* and he had some very curious beetles allied to *cicindela*, with wide flattened bodies: they are to be found in summer near St. George's Bay. With a few exceptions, it appears that the Maltese butterflies do not differ from the British. The swallow-tail butterfly, and the death's-head moth, are both common here in the proper season; and Dr. Leach had a fine specimen of the former, which had just come out of the chrysalis. Among the insects not natives of

\* Linnean genera.

this island, were some fine *cerambyces* from Corfu and Italy, and a gigantic *carabus* from Tripoli. Dr. Leach has given me several insects, chiefly beetles, and in return I was glad to supply him with specimens of the *cerambyx* we sometimes find on the *asphodelus*, but which he had never seen.

A few days ago we set off early in the morning for a long exploring walk, first going along the coast beyond St. George's Bay, when we turned off into the interior, and so making a wide circuit, came down to the harbour near Fort Manuel. For some distance we followed the course of a little valley, which, though more fertile, or, I should rather say, less barren than any part of the island we had hitherto visited, was almost totally unproductive in novelties, either in plants, shells, or insects. Almost the only trees we met with on this excursion were the fig, now

without foliage, and the carob-tree, or St. John's bread, (*ceratonia siliqua*,) a beautiful evergreen, with low spreading branches, and dark shining leaves. It produces a great quantity of flat brown pods, of a mealy consistence and sweetish taste, used as food both for men and cattle, but on this island chiefly, I believe, for the latter. At present the pods are green, and very small. Some persons have supposed that it was the fruit of this tree which furnished a repast for St. John in the wilderness, for they assert that the word translated "locusts" will bear this construction; but there seems no reason for such an alteration, as dried locusts are to this day an article of food in some eastern countries. In the course of our walk we discovered a pleasant little grove of carob-trees, some of which spread over a surface of forty or fifty feet in diameter. On the

branches we found abundance of the *helix melitensis*, and *clausilia tuberculata*; the latter were unusually large and beautiful. While employed in collecting these shells, some peasants came up to us, and seemed desirous of seeing what we were in search of. On exhibiting the contents of our baskets, they informed us by signs that these snails were unfit for food; and as from our ignorance of their language we had no means of explaining that we wanted them for any other purpose, and as we still persisted in collecting all we could find, they no doubt informed their friends at home that they had met with a couple of very foolish obstinate fellows. The large garden-snail is a common article of food with the Maltese.

Here and there we saw a few olive-trees which are evergreens, not unlike willows in their growth, but with the leaves of a darker green.

The prickly-pear (*cactus opuntia*) is a very common plant here. It is like a cactus cultivated in English green-houses, but very much larger, as it sometimes attains to the height of ten or twelve feet, and the leaves are from twelve to eighteen inches in length, and one or two in thickness. The whole plant is covered with sharp spines. The fruit, which grows on the edge of the leaf, is about the size of a lemon, but of rather a longer form, and has somewhat the appearance of a small pine-apple. Many persons consider the prickly-pear a delicious fruit, but I have not yet learned to like it. The plant is very easily propagated, merely by sticking a leaf into the ground. The tomata-plant is very generally cultivated here, and large quantities of the fruit are brought to market and used in soups and gravies, to which they impart a very delicious flavour.



It is not an uncommon practice on this island to feed horses with green barley, which is pulled up by the roots before the appearance of the ear, as there is very little pasture-land.

The houses of the peasants and small farmers are high, square, flat-roofed buildings, without any visible chimneys, appearing more like small towers than dwelling-houses; they have none of the picturesque beauty of English cottages, from which also they differ in seldom having ornamental gardens around them. The nominal wages of labouring men in the country is said to be about eightpence a day, which is tolerably good pay, considering the low price of provisions; but from the scarcity of employment, I believe they are glad to work for a much smaller sum. The food of the lower orders consists chiefly of barley-bread, salt pork,

anchovies, oil, and Sicily cheese, which last is a very poor article indeed, and has scarcely any taste but saltiness.

On our return by the side of the harbour we met with a man employed in catching shrimps, with an apparatus consisting of a number of shallow sieves formed of fine network stretched upon hoops. They were baited with small pieces of fish, and were sunk to the bottom by stones fastened round the edge, their situation being marked by pieces of cork at the end of the lines. When they had remained in the water a few minutes, they were taken out again by means of a long pole with a fork at the end of it, when two or three small shrimps, seldom more, were generally found in each net.

Here also was another fisherman provided with a line more than a hundred yards in length, to which were attached a great num-

ber of shorter lines, with several baited hooks on each. As this poor man had no boat, how do you think he contrived to send his apparatus out into the deep water? He had fastened one end of his line to a small raft of canes lashed together, on which he had erected a mast and sail, and the wind blowing from the shore, his hooks were thus carried out as far as the length of his line would allow, while he remained on the bank, and occasionally drew in his apparatus to replace his baits, and to see what success he had met with.

We lately paid a visit to the Lancasterian school in Valetta. The boy's school-room may be about a hundred feet long, and thirty or forty wide, and the present number of scholars is two hundred and forty-six, of whom two hundred and ten were present. They are received at the age of six, and are

instructed in reading, (both in English and Italian,) in writing, and in arithmetic. The girls have the same instruction as the boys, with the addition of sewing. There were two hundred and thirteen present, the number on the books being two hundred and seventy-four. Of their skill in the use of the needle, we brought away several specimens for the inspection of our friends at home. You would have been amused to have seen me examining little samples of hemming, button-hole making, &c., and giving my opinion very learnedly on the neatness of the work. These schools are supported chiefly by government, and appear to be admirably conducted, the Maltese spirit of cleanliness pervading every part of the establishment. We were informed that no religious instruction is given: this is a wise regulation in a school, the committee

of which includes both Protestants and Catholics, who would find it very difficult to agree respecting the sort of instruction to be communicated.

The same day we went to the hospital, where there are generally about four hundred patients, male and female. The wards are very clean, and well ventilated, and the greatest attention is paid to the comforts of the inmates. Over some of the beds a black cross was suspended. On inquiring the meaning of this, we were informed that these patients had been given over by the doctors, and had received the last sacrament. One of the wards of this hospital is set apart for those patients who have known better days.

We next visited the armoury in the palace. It contains about eleven thousand muskets, a great many pistols and boarding-pikes, and

some ancient armour, guns, and cross-bows. Here also is a very curious old cannon, composed of a thin copper tube about three inches in diameter, round which a small rope is wound, till it is brought to the requisite thickness and strength. Of course it would bear but a very small charge of powder, but it might have been considered a formidable weapon at a time when the science of gunnery was in its infancy. We were informed that this curious old "rope gun" was brought by one of the grand masters from the island of Rhodes. This subject reminds me of another singular kind of ordnance with which some parts of the coast were formerly defended. These are immense mortars, which have been bored out of the solid rock; and it is said they were charged with several barrels of powder, and about a ton of large stones, which being fired into the air,



might annoy an enemy considerably. I have seen only one of these mortars, which is by the water-side, very near our house. It is about three feet in diameter, and six or eight in depth. But I am informed that stone mortars very much larger than this were formerly in existence in some parts of the coast.

On the 16th of last month I witnessed a grand procession in commemoration of St. Paul's arrival on the island. The company were headed by a party of shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, and other tradesmen, all dressed in white robes, followed by monks of various orders, Capuchins, Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustines, and Dominicans. Then, borne on the shoulders of about twenty men, came the statue of St. Paul, a wooden figure, larger than life, adorned with a gorgeous flowered robe, and having by his side a representation

of a fire, with the viper writhing in the flames. This figure usually stands in St. Paul's church, from which it is annually brought forth and carried through the principal streets of Valletta. Next in the procession were the clergy, amounting to two or three hundred in number, including the students, the youngest walking first. These were followed by the canons of St. Paul's church, and last of all came the bishop. All the company carried long wax candles, but on this occasion the wind was so high, that they could not be lighted.

Since I began writing this letter we have formed an acquaintance with a Capt. R——, a Swiss gentleman, who has this morning informed us that in a few days he proposes going to Messina, to which place we have suddenly concluded to accompany him, for we are weary of this desolate isle. How

long we shall remain in Sicily is quite uncertain, neither have we yet determined how we shall proceed homewards from thence. We may either take our passage in a vessel from Messina to some English port, or we may go to Marseilles and so home through France. This sudden alteration in our plans will prevent us from seeing some parts of Malta which we had intended to have visited when the spring was more advanced. We wished to have explored the south-west coast, and to have visited Citta Vecchia, and the "Boschetto." This place from its name and from the annexed view, appears to be more woody and pleasant than any other part of the island.

After going on board several vessels in the harbour, we have at length taken our passage in a small brig, bound for Mascali, which lies twenty or thirty miles this side of



BOSCHETTO





Messina. We do not anticipate any pleasure from the voyage, for the vessel is very small, and the cabin is close and dirty. However, the captain has promised to have it thoroughly cleaned, and he added, that he was always very kind and attentive to his passengers.

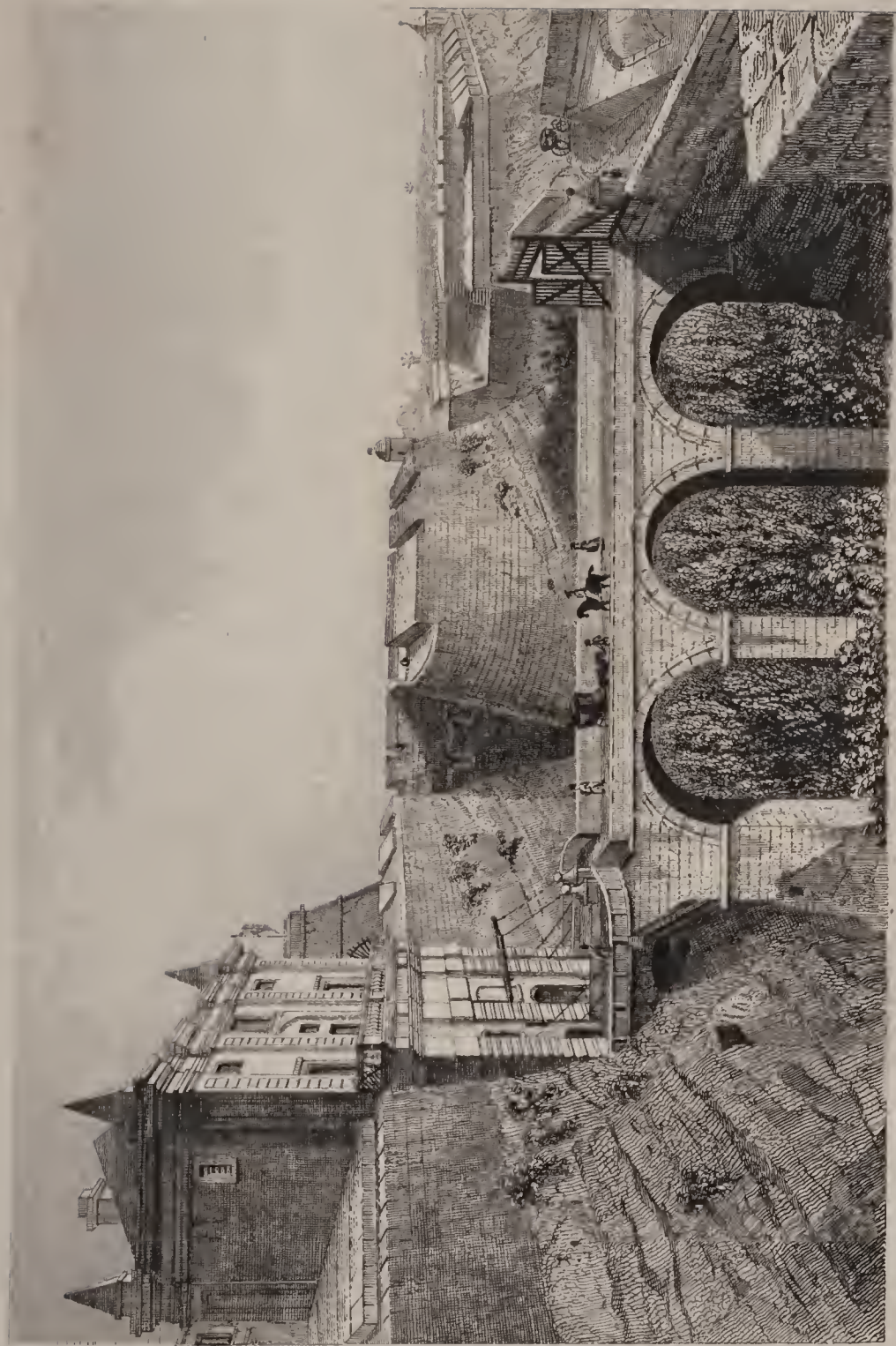
We have been busily employed all the day in packing up our collections, procuring passports, and taking leave of our friends. From some of these we have received much kindness and attention, particularly from Mr. L—— and his lady, and to the latter I am indebted for the drawings of Valetta and other places on the island with which some of my letters have been illustrated. I know nothing of the artist, “C. Brocktorff,” but I can certify that he has made very accurate drawings of those scenes with which I am acquainted, and



especially of the Porta Reale, with the tremendous artificial chasm in front.

We were glad to receive intelligence by the last packet from England of the safety of the vessel we encountered off Cape de Gatt. But it appears that she sustained more damage than we did, for though she put into Cadiz to repair, she still remained so leaky that the crew were obliged to keep the pumps at work all the remainder of the voyage.

I will write again from Messina or from Marseilles, if we should visit that port.



PORTA REALE.



		OBSERVATIONS ON THE WEATHER.
		<i>December, 1833.</i>
	Thermom. 8 Morning.	
1	57	Very fine and warm.
2	58	Fine and clear. Blowing hard from the northward.
3	56	Clear and mild.
4	59	Ditto.
5	54	Ditto.
6	58	Ditto. Sun rather oppressive.
7	58	Fine and clear.
8	—	Fine, but windy.
9	—	Showery and windy.
10	—	Fine, but cold and windy.
11	—	Cloudy and mild, with heavy showers.
12	—	Cloudy, with occasional showers.
13	—	Clear and windy.
14	51	Very cold, and blowing.
15	50	Ditto.
16	54	Warm and calm.
17	56	Cloudy, and rather cold.
18	56	Clear and cold.
19	56	Cloudy and cold.
20	56	Mild.
21	56	Ditto.
22	55	Cold and blowing, but clear.
23	—	Clear and mild.
24	58	Ditto.
25	59	Very fine and warm, (Christmas-day.)
26	59	Cloudy and mild.
27	56	Ditto.
28	55	Cloudy and rather cold.
29	54	Blowing hard, and cold from the northward.
30	54	Fine and warm.
31	—	Clear and rather cold.

Thermom. 8 morning.		OBSERVATIONS ON THE WEATHER,  <i>January, 1834.</i>
1	58	Fine and clear.
2	—	Fine and windy.
3	—	Cold, windy, and showery. Occasionally hail-storms.
4	—	Fine, but very cold and windy.
5	—	Blowing hard, with small driving rain.
6	56	Fine.
7	—	Calm and bright. Rather too warm in the sun.
8	54	Ditto.
9	57	Morning fine. Blowing and raining in aftern.
10	56	Fine, with a few showers. [ers.
11	58	Blowing hard from westward, with heavy show-
12	57	Clear and calm. Heat in the sun oppressive.
13	53	Fine and clear.
14	56	Ditto.
15	56	Clear and very warm.
16	—	Rather cooler.
17	—	Clear and warm.
18	—	Cloudy, but fine and mild.
19	58	Clear, with cold north wind.
20	58	Blowing hard from the westward, but clear and mild.
21	58	Ditto.
22	52	Very warm and calm.
23	53	Fine, but cooler.
24	56	Calm and bright.
25	57	Fine, but windy.
26	58	Fine and very warm.
27	54	Fine, but cooler.
28	—	Clear and warm.
29	56	Ditto.
30	54	Ditto.
31	60	Dull and cloudy. Occasional showers.



		OBSERVATIONS ON THE WEATHER,
		<i>February, 1834.</i>
	Thermom. 8 morning.	
1	52	Windy and wet. Fine in afternoon.
2	51	Clear and rather cool.
3	—	Fine and warm.
4	—	Morning fine. Heavy showers in afternoon.
5	54	Cloudy, with occasional showers.
6	—	Fine and calm.
7	—	Clear, but very cold.
8	54	Windy, cold, and wet.
9	54	Fine and mild, but cloudy.
10	54	Heavy gale from N.E., with continued rain. ( <i>Euroclydon.</i> )
11	53	Ditto. less rain.
12	52	Fine and clear.
13	—	Cold and windy. Heavy showers with hail.
14	—	Fine and warm.
15	56	Clear and rather cool.
16	58	Fine, but windy.
17	58	Blowing hard, with heavy showers.
18	—	Ditto.
19	58	Very windy, but mild and fine.
20	59	Blowing hard from north-eastward.
21	56	Raining and blowing hard.
22	—	Clear and mild.
23	57	Clear, with very cold N.W. wind.
24	—	Hot sun, cold wind.
25	—	Fine, clear, and mild.
26	56	Very fine and warm.
27	58	Ditto.
28	—	Ditto.



## LETTER VI.

*Messina, March 22d, 1834.*

WE were detained in Malta several days after I closed my last letter by contrary winds, but on the evening of Tuesday, March 4th, after a very hot and calm day, a light breeze arose from the southward, and we went on board the vessel in which we had engaged a passage to Mascali. We did not leave the Grand Harbour till seven in the evening. There was very little wind when we got under weigh, but it gradually increased after sunset, and by midnight we had a fine breeze from south-west, which forced our sluggish bark through the water at the rate of about four miles an hour. Our

captain appeared to think this very fast sailing. The vessel was a very small brig, named the San Pietro, a painting of which saint was hung up in the cabin, with a lamp burning before it by night and by day. For an English vessel of this size, three men and a boy would have been considered a very sufficient crew, but we had no less than *twelve* hands on board, a filthy and half-savage company, but very civil and good-tempered to us, and I believe they did their utmost to make us comfortable. They certainly failed in the attempt, for we had a most miserable voyage. The cabin was very small, and although some attempt had been made to purify it, it was still so filthy, that as a place of shelter for the night it offered fewer attractions, either to the eye or to the nose, than the well-littered pigsties of an English farm-yard. But the

cold at length overcame our disgust, and compelled us to take refuge in this den, where, hoping to pass a few hours of the tedious night in sleep, we wrapped ourselves up in our cloaks, and ventured to lie down on some mattresses which had been placed for our accommodation. We soon repented of our rashness, for an army of fleas had already taken possession of our quarters, and their envenomed attacks effectually prevented us from obtaining sleep. Capt. R——, however, seemed to be proof against the assaults of the enemy, either from a constitutional want of irritability or from a soldier's life having accustomed him to the annoyance.

After a very miserable night, by daylight we found ourselves becalmed, about thirty miles from Malta, and during the whole of that day, I believe, we did not advance a

single mile. The Sicilian coast was in sight, and we had an occasional glimpse of Mount Etna, but a thick haze over the land made the view very indistinct. This delay in our voyage was very vexatious, but our captain and his men appeared perfectly happy, and resigned to their situation. Those who were not asleep below, found ample amusement in a pack of cards. They lay basking in the sun for hours, intent on their game; the loser instead of paying any money, received a certain number of blows on his nose with a card, which ridiculous punishment was given and received with a great deal of merriment and goodhumour. The crew received no regular wages, but were paid by a certain portion of the freight or passage-money.

We had comforted ourselves during the day with thinking, that this tedious calm

would not continue after sunset, but no breeze reached us till past midnight, and then it came from the northward, directly against us. We passed another most comfortless night, endeavouring to ascertain which was the most tolerable, the deck or the cabin; on the former we were pinched with the cold wind, and in the latter the source of annoyance need not again be particularly described.

In the morning the breeze gradually died away again, or, as English sailors say, "the sun burnt up the wind," and we remained becalmed till after mid-day, when we had a light southerly breeze, which carried us slowly towards Cape Passaro. On our way we passed a small turtle asleep on the water, but our people did not think it worth while to go in pursuit of it. In the afternoon we passed close to an island off Cape Passaro,

on which was a large square tower or castle, and at midnight we were off Syracuse, when the wind gradually came round to north-east. At sunrise we had a fine view of Mount Etna, or "Mon Gibello," as our people called it, and surpassingly beautiful the old giant appeared, with his black cap and pure white robe, and all the lower part of him, with the land in the neighbourhood, concealed by clouds and mists. The wind was now directly contrary, and had raised so much sea, that our vessel was quite unable to beat to windward against it, and we continued sailing backwards and forwards for some hours without being any nearer to our port. As we stood in towards the land, we had an indistinct view of Syracuse, or "*Serra-oo-sa*," as our men called it. Towards noon the wind moderated, and the sea became smoother, but we still made very



little progress to windward. In the afternoon our men lowered down the boat, and pulled in towards the shore, to meet a fisherman, of whom they bought a huge long-tailed fish, like that which in some parts of England is called "an old maid." She was very disgusting in appearance, but when boiled, she proved to be much better tasted than we had expected, and we all made a hearty meal on her, for the stock of provisions we had brought from Malta was almost exhausted.

We passed a fourth nearly sleepless night, during which we had light and variable winds, and at daylight we found ourselves still within a few miles of Syracuse. In the afternoon we were becalmed for some hours within a mile of the town, which has a very mean and shabby appearance when seen from the water. High in the air, over the

houses, we observed a number of square paper kites, which had *no tails*, and as they fled remarkably well and steadily, I concluded that they were balanced by weights at the lower corners. Late in the evening, as our vessel had drifted close to the rocky shore, and was unmanageable from want of wind, our people were obliged to tow her into the harbour of Syracuse.

Being now quite tired of the San Pietro and of her *accommodations*, and thoroughly exhausted by want of sleep, we determined to remain a few days in this place, and to proceed to Messina by some other conveyance. But the quarantine regulations would not allow us to land that evening. After a fifth miserably wearisome night, about nine in the morning, we went on shore with part of our luggage, which we rescued from the search of the custom-house officers by the

payment of half a dollar. We first presented our passports at the proper office, and then proceeded to an hotel, where, after a thorough ablution and change of raiment, followed by a breakfast of coffee and beef-steaks, we found ourselves so refreshed, that instead of going immediately to bed, as we had proposed, we set out on a walk through the town.

Modern Syracuse is a dull shabby place, indeed; it is melancholy to walk through its dirty narrow streets, and to remember its former magnificence. If historians are to be credited, it contained at one time one million two hundred thousand inhabitants within its walls, which were twenty-two miles in circumference, and it was defended by an army of one hundred thousand foot, ten thousand horse, and by a navy of five hundred ships. The modern town is built on

the northern side of the harbour's mouth, on a peninsula, now converted into an island by four canals or ditches, which are crossed by drawbridges. The streets are narrow, dirty, and without foot ways. With few exceptions, the houses are small and mean, and have sloping roofs, covered by tiles, which are of a dirty red colour, and are laid on in a very irregular manner. The cathedral stands on the site of the ancient temple of Minerva, the beautiful fluted pillars of which are in very good preservation, and now support the roof of the modern building; part of the marble pavement is also remaining. There is a public museum in the town, containing a good collection of Syracusan antiquities, among the most esteemed of which are statues of Venus and of Esculapius, the former without a head. I can see little to admire in these battered mutilated trunks,

but our conductor assured us, that the Venus was considered to be equal in beauty to the Venus di Medici. In the building which contains the museum, there is also a library.

The harbour of Syracuse is a very fine sheet of water, about two miles in length, and one in width. On the western side it is bordered by a low flat country, at some seasons swampy and unhealthy, and the view in that direction is bounded by a range of barren, rocky hills. As the entrance is very narrow, this must be a safe harbour at all times, but I do not know whether there be sufficient depth of water for large ships.

Having seen enough of the beauties of modern Syracuse, we now accepted the services of a guide, and were conducted out of the town, passing over the four drawbridges which connect the island with the main land. We first inspected

the remains of some marble pillars which formed part of the entrance to a temple of Ceres and Proserpine, and then proceeded to an amphitheatre, near which were the dens and dungeons in which were confined the wild beasts and the miserable victims condemned to be devoured by them. The walls of these dens were nearly covered by the true maiden-hair growing in most beautiful profusion. We were next shown the remains of Dyonisius's palace, which consisted of an extensive excavation like a quarry, with a tower-like piece of rock in the centre, on which were some ruined walls. Near this place were some underground baths, or reservoirs for water. Here were a quantity of bones, said to be those of some of the unfortunate Frenchmen killed at the massacre of the Sicilian vespers. I brought home with me part of a skull, remarkable for its extraordinary thickness.



On our return we went on board the San Pietro to pay the captain for our passage, and to bring on shore the remainder of our luggage, which we were allowed to do without its being subjected to any examination, on payment of another half-dollar.

Beautifully clean and most comfortable beds offered irresistible attractions to weary voyagers, and we retired to rest soon after dark. Those only who have passed many successive nights in cold and misery and wakefulness, can fully appreciate the blessing of sound and uninterrupted repose. My last moments of consciousness that evening were employed in endeavouring to decide which would be attended with the most suffering, death occasioned by the want of *food*, or of that equally necessary restorative, *sleep*.

In the morning we set off on an expedition to visit other antiquities in the neigh-

bourhood. The day was delightfully fine and bright, but not unpleasantly warm. Capt. R—— was mounted on a mule, and William and myself on horses: all three were very shabby, rough-coated animals, but they proved to be extremely sure-footed; and had they not been well accustomed to such steep and rugged paths as we travelled over on this day's excursion, there can be no doubt that some terrible downfalls would have occurred.

I feel myself entirely incompetent to describe all the old walls and heaps of moss-covered stones we visited in the course of this day's ride. But to me the most interesting of all the remains of ancient Syracuse, is the curious cavern called "Dionysius's Ear," which it is said that tyrant caused to be made in the form of the interior of the human ear; and we are told, that by con-

fining his prisoners in it he was enabled to overhear their conversation, and to detect conspiracies against his life. It does not appear to bear the *smallest resemblance* to any part of the human ear; therefore, if it were really constructed for the above-mentioned purpose, (and it is difficult to imagine any other to which it could have been applied,) it is much more probable that it received its name because the tyrant used it as an artificial ear, or an apparatus for hearing sounds very distinctly.

It will be difficult to form an idea of this curious excavation from a description only. It is a cavern in the form of a pointed arch, the sides of which are of unequal curvature, so that a perpendicular from the apex would not fall in the middle of the base line of the arch. The height at the entrance, which is in the face of a perpendicular cliff,

is ninety feet, according to our guide's statement; but I believe it is considerably less, and it diminishes gradually towards the extremity. The extent of the cavern is probably about two hundred feet, but I very foolishly omitted to take any measurement of its dimensions at the time. The sides are adorned of the true maiden-hair. In the face of the rock, a little on one side of the top of the arch, is a small recess, which is supposed to have been the *listening place* where Dionysius was stationed to overhear the discourse of his captives, who were confined at the further end of the cavern. The recess communicates with the top of the cavern by means of a small passage.

Upon inquiring whether there was any way of ascending to the listening place, some men living in the neighbourhood immediately

produced a rope, which they passed through a pulley attached to an iron-bar driven into the ground at the top of the rock. They then fastened an old chair to the rope, and informed us that all was ready. Though the apparatus did not appear very strong, we were assured that it was perfectly safe, and Capt. R—— seated himself in the chair, but he had not ascended many yards before he complained of giddiness, and begged to be lowered down again. I therefore took his place, and was soon hoisted up and safely landed in the little recess. My companions went to the further end of the cave, where there are several holes, which appear to have been the receptacles of rings or staples to which the prisoners were chained. I was now directed to put my head into the little passage communicating with the cavern, when I found that any sen-

tence spoken by the *prisoners* in their usual tone was distinctly audible. I could also hear the faint sound made by tearing a very small piece of writing-paper.

From this experiment, which perhaps has been tried by others who have visited this singular cavern, it appears that it *might* have been used by Dionysius as a place for over-hearing conversation, though the same end might have been attained by a much less complicated and expensive apparatus. It was probably a whim of the moment, and it is just such a childish design as would be likely to be conceived in the brain of a capricious tyrant. We may conclude that he chained his prisoners at such a distance from each other, that they could not converse in a whisper, so that there would be no danger of his losing a single word of their communications. But I suppose that the eaves-



dropping monarch had a more convenient way of mounting to his station than by means of a rope and a chair, though we could discover no remains of any steps either from the top or from the bottom of the rock. The whole of the cavern is evidently of artificial formation.

While we were off the town of Syracuse in the San Pietro, the captain gave us a curious version of the story connected with this "Ear." He said that Dionysius confined there such persons as he imagined had accused him of being *a bad Christian*, and if by listening to their conversation his suspicions were confirmed, he sentenced the calumniators to be shot.

I will now briefly mention some other antiquities we visited in the course of this morning's excursion. We were shown the remains of the walls of the ancient city, but

they were such complete ruins, and were so overgrown with grass and herbage, that it required a close examination to convince us that these heaps of stones had ever been used for the purposes of building. We passed over part of a road, in which the ruts made by the passing of carriages perhaps two thousand years ago, were deeply worn into the solid rock; and we ascended the ruins of a castle, from the top of which we enjoyed a most enchanting view of the sea, and of the coast from Syracuse beyond Catania, with old Etna towering up into the heavens in the back-ground. We visited several excavations or Latomias, which are supposed to have been quarries originally, and afterwards used for prisons; an underground aqueduct, which now answers the purpose of conveying water to a mill, and the remains of a most magnificent theatre,

which it has been calculated is large enough to have accommodated forty thousand spectators. We next proceeded to some very extensive catacombs, through which we were piloted by a hermit, who had taken up his abode in a cell at the entrance, and without his guidance we should soon have lost our way in these dismal winding passages. They are formed in the solid rock, and have niches in the sides for the reception of bodies, but these have long been removed. Our hermit endeavoured to make us believe that these caverns extended as far as Catania, about forty miles! Not far from the catacombs is a tomb, which is shown as that of Archimedes; but there is some reason to doubt whether this be really the place where that celebrated mathematician and military engineer was interred.

We finished our day's excursion by paying

a visit to a Capuchin convent near the sea-side. We were politely received by a very handsome young monk, who took care to inform us before we parted, that the Duke of Devonshire, on a late visit to Syracuse, had exchanged portraits with him. Close to the convent is a very large Latomia, from which it is supposed that a great part of the stone used in building ancient Syracuse was procured. This quarry has been converted by the monks into a very beautiful garden, chiefly for orange and lemon-trees; and here, for the first time in our lives, we had the pleasure of gathering oranges from the tree. We also tasted a very pleasant fruit called a sweet lemon. It was larger than the common lemon, and the eatable part was the inner white rind, which was half-an-inch or more in thickness, and like an apple in consistence, but not quite so juicy. The inte-

rior was as acid as the pulp of a common lemon.

After we had spent an hour very pleasantly in this curious garden, our guide invited us into his convent, and showed us the burying-place of the monks. It was a large vault under the church, lighted by windows from above. On entering the monk gave us each a pinch of snuff, I suppose for the purpose of correcting any bad smell, but my nose could detect nothing very offensive. But the place was full of flies, both alive and dead. The bodies are first subjected to a drying and preservative process, I believe by being kept in lime for some months, after which they are set upright in open recesses in the walls, and an assemblage of ghastly grinning old fellows they are. One of these mummies had been in the vault one hundred and thirty years, and another only six months ;



but they differed but little from each other in appearance, though the latter, on a very close approach, had still a slight animal odour hanging about him.

Our guide next conducted us to his cell, which though poor and very small, was clean and comfortable. Here he showed us a badly executed portrait of the Duke of Devonshire, and requested us to enter our names in a book he kept for that purpose. Near this convent was found the headless statue of Venus, now in the museum at Syracuse.

A great part of the country we passed over in this ride was rocky and uncultivated; and though much more pleasant in its appearance than any part of Malta, was by no means productive in natural curiosities. We found a fine species of sage, a beautiful red anemone, a dwarf asphodelus, and a prickly



nightshade, with blue flowers and yellow berries as large as an Orlean plum. The latter plant was a strong branching shrub, four or five feet in height. We saw many swallow-tailed butterflies, and one or two resembling our brimstone-butterfly, but distant. Green lizards were very abundant, and appeared rather larger than those of Malta. We saw one running up the wall of a house with a large white butterfly in his mouth.

We remained at Syracuse three days, but we added very little to our collections there, as we did not think it worth while to unpack all our apparatus for so short a time. At a later season of the year I think it would be a good station for a naturalist. We collected a few sea-shells, and on the walls of the hotel I found two or three specimens of a pretty little helix, like *h. melitensis*, but

smaller, and of a flatter form. The marks are also more regular and distinct.

We crossed the harbour to procure some of the reed, called the papyrus, which the ancient Egyptians used as a substitute for paper. On the other side we entered a narrow muddy river, and ascended it for a mile or two, not without some difficulty, from the strength of the current, and the banks were so overgrown with tall canes, that it was impossible to tow the boat from the shore. We found abundance of the papyrus growing in large patches close to the river. The stems of this most beautiful plant are eight or ten feet in height, and more than two inches in thickness at the root, tapering gradually, without knot or blemish, to the top, where an infinite number of fine branches, or filaments, spring out from a centre, forming a globular head two or three

feet in diameter. The inside of the stem of the papyrus consists of a white pithy substance, which may very easily be split into thin sheets, and the Egyptians had the art of uniting these together, so that the joinings were nearly invisible ; in this manner they formed sheets of large size. I have pressed some of the pith between blotting-paper till dry, and I find that without any further preparation it resembles paper more than any other unmanufactured substance I have ever seen. It is flexible, tough, and strong, has a tolerably smooth surface, and when written upon with a common pen, the ink does not run.

Not far from the banks of the river, by which the papyrus grows, are two fluted pillars, about six feet in diameter, and forty or fifty yards from each other. They are the only remains of a once magnificent temple of Jupiter.

We were amused at the costume of some of the men we met near the town. Their dress consisted of a short jacket, black plush breeches, open at the knee, high black boots, and a very clean white cotton night-cap.

We left Syracuse on Wednesday, 12th March, in a speronara which we had engaged to take us to Catania. Speronaras are much used in these seas, chiefly for coasting, but they are considered very safe boats, and often perform long voyages. Our boat, which was a small one of the kind, was about thirty feet in length ; she was sharp at both ends, and had a deck formed of moveable planks, and a wooden covering, like the tilt of a wagon, abaft, in the place of a cabin. We had two young Italian painters for fellow-passengers, one of whom could speak English, but, alas ! the motion of the boat

very soon put a stop to his conversation. Poor fellow ! he reminded me of Byron's

“Licentiate Pedrillo,  
Who several languages did understand,  
But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow.”

As the wind was contrary and very light, we were obliged to row for two or three hours, but about noon a fine south-easterly breeze sprang up, and enabled us to make use of our sails. These were a jib, a low sprit-mainsail, and a lateen mizen. We kept near to the shore as far as a point of land called San Croce, but there was nothing very interesting or beautiful in the view. Near this point lies the town of Augusta, (pronounced by our men “*Ow-oos-ta.*”) After leaving Point San Croce, our course lay at too great a distance from the land for us to distinguish more than the bare outline, and the atmosphere was so thick and

hazy, that Mount Etna, the grand object of interest, was entirely obscured nearly the whole of the day. In clear weather the view of Catania from the sea must be exceedingly beautiful ; the land appearing from a distance to be thickly wooded, and rising gradually from the shore to the foot of the mountain.

By the help of sails and oars we reached our port about five o'clock ; had we arrived after sunset, our boatmen said we should have been obliged to have remained on board all night. We went through the usual ceremonies with the custom-house people, and then proceeded to the Corona, which we had been informed was one of the principal inns, but it had rather a shabby appearance. However, the proprietor, Abbate, might have safely followed the example of the landlord of a miserable road-side ale-house in the west of Eng-



land, who is said to have added to his sign this notification, "Better accommodations within than might be expected from outward appearances." The provisions at the Corona were excellent. Abbate keeps a book in which travellers insert their names, with remarks on the treatment they have received, and some persons have amused themselves by adding a great deal of absurd nonsense besides. We were glad to find that the waiter of this hotel could speak English. He was a good-tempered, communicative fellow, and he informed us, that he was by birth a Spaniard, but had spent some years in England as a workman in a pottery.

We remained at Catania several days waiting for clear weather, for we wished to ascend Mount Etna as far as the termination of the woody region, or "Bosco," as it is called; at this time of the year, I believe,

it is quite impossible to reach the summit on account of the snow. During the greater part of our stay, the weather was so wet and cold that we had not much opportunity of exploring the neighbourhood. There was no fireplace or stove of any kind in our rooms, for the Sicilians are not yet sufficiently enlightened to have discovered that the usual method of producing warmth is preferable to the unwholesome brazier of burning charcoal which they make use of in cold weather. While we were confined to the house by the rain, we were, however, compelled to adopt this method of keeping ourselves warm, but it is a poor substitute for the cheerful blaze of an English fireside. The gas from the charcoal causes headache and a feeling of oppression, and in a small room the consequences would no doubt be much more serious. To correct

the unpleasant effluvia, pieces of lemon are sometimes laid on the burning charcoal. These diffuse an agreeable odour, but can produce no other good effect.

Our unexpected visit to Syracuse had so exhausted our finances, that we were obliged to apply to Mr. Rose, the English consul, for a supply of money, which he very kindly granted us, on our showing him a letter of credit I had received from Mr. R——, at Malta, to a merchant at Messina.

I believe that Catania is considered to be a beautiful city, and it certainly contains some fine buildings. To me it appeared an exceedingly dull place, but my opinion might have been influenced by the gloomy weather. But the view of Etna from this city is, indeed, surpassingly beautiful, and it is an object I should never be weary of gazing upon. It presented an unusually

grand appearance on the evening of the day after our arrival at Catania. Constant drizzling rain had been falling till late in the afternoon, when the clouds, which had entirely concealed the mountain from our sight, suddenly cleared off, and we beheld it covered to the base with a coat of fresh fallen snow, the dazzling whiteness of which was increased by the rays of the setting sun, and by the strong contrast of dark clouds in the background.

We were constantly reminded that we were in the neighbourhood of a volcano, even when it was concealed from our view, for many of the houses in Catania are built of lava, and the pavement is chiefly composed of the same material. The two principal streets, which are of great length, cross each other at right-angles, and from these branch out many other streets and lanes,

most of which are narrow and dirty. In some of the streets are moveable iron bridges for the purpose of crossing the torrent which runs down the middle in rainy weather. In an open space in front of the cathedral, there is an excellent figure of an elephant, formed of black lava, with tusks of white marble, and supporting on his back an ancient Egyptian pillar, covered with hieroglyphics; underneath there is a fountain. There appears to be but little trade in the place; indeed, the harbour is not large enough to contain many vessels, for the only shelter is a small pier built of large blocks of lava. Catania could once boast of a beautiful natural pier, formed by a torrent of lava, which extended a long way into the sea, but this was quite destroyed by the eruption of 1669.

We visited several museums, one of which



is considered to be a fine collection of broken bits of marble and mutilated statues, and it also contains a great number of very pretty little ancient figures in bronze; some Turkish fire-arms, inlaid with ivory; some ancient Sicilian garments, a few shells, insects, minerals, &c.

Should I ever become a monk I will join the order of Benedictines, and endeavour to obtain admission into their convent at Catania, where these gentlemen have a very handsome establishment indeed. Their convent is built in the form of a hollow square, and formerly contained seven hundred monks, but at present their number is only about two hundred. The community is very rich, and we were told that the monks sometimes boast that they can travel on their own land as far as Messina, a distance of sixty or seventy miles. We were very



politely received at the convent, and were even admitted into the private apartments of the superior, but we did not see that dignity. He has several large rooms, handsomely furnished, and certainly in this part of the establishment there was no appearance of any monastic discipline or mortification of the flesh. In the church we were shown a fine painting, which our attendant informed us was the work of Sir Thomas Lawrence, and that the subject was Pope Gregory XII. sending the monk Augustine on a mission to the British. This painting is protected by a curtain, and when our conductor was preparing to draw it aside, he requested us to retire to the other side of the church for a short time, after which we were allowed to approach as near as we pleased. We could not conceive the motive for this extraordinary precaution, but we have since been in-

formed, (whether correctly or not I cannot say,) that it is considered improper that the painting when first uncovered should be exposed to the gaze of heretic eyes before it has been looked upon, and perhaps adored, by a good Catholic.

We spent some time in the convent garden. It is a large old-fashioned place, surrounded by beds of barren lava. As we were coming away, the gardener requested each of us to accept a pretty little nosegay of flowers. After carrying mine through the streets till I was tired of it, I offered it to a girl who was sitting at an open window knitting, and very much astonished the young lady appeared. But she accepted the gift, and muttered some words, which I received as thanks.

On returning to the hotel we found in waiting for us several men who had for sale little

boxes formed of lava, and some beautiful necklaces, and other ornaments of amber, which substance is found in the neighbourhood. They asked an extravagant price for these articles, but at length they appeared perfectly satisfied with less than half the sum originally demanded.

While my companions were occupied in examining the museum of the Benedictines, which is open only at certain hours, I set out on a ramble in the neighbourhood, hoping to find some beautiful plants, or shells, or insects, which would afford me more pleasure than a sight of all the broken pieces of marble and mutilated statues in the world. In a small stream on the outskirts of the town, I soon discovered some very interesting specimens of the animal kingdom, differing considerably in their habits from any of the same species I had before

seen. These were a number of women and young girls standing, bare-legged, nearly up to their knees in the water, employed in washing clothes, which they rubbed with great vehemence on some large flat stones on the bank, giving by this rough treatment no small encouragement to the linen and cotton trades. I very unintentionally gave offence by stopping to contemplate this amusing group. One of the party addressed me in a manner which was evidently intended to convey a reproof; and though I was not sufficiently acquainted with the language to understand the words she used, the expression of her face and the tone of her voice said as plainly as possible, "Go along about your business, you impertinent fellow, do!"

I now bent my course towards the sea-shore, to the southward of the town, climbing over a very rugged bed of lava, part of

the fiery deluge which burst forth from the side of the mountain during the terrible eruption of 1669. It lies in confused masses heaped on each other, and in some places has much the appearance of natural rocks, while in others it retains the marks of having once been in a fluid state. The part I crossed, which appeared to be about a mile in width, was a black barren waste, with scarcely any trace of vegetation on its surface, except here and there a few lichens.

Soon after passing the lava, I waded through a shallow stream, and arrived at a fine wide sandy beach, which extended as far as the eye could reach to the southward, and was bounded by a line of barren sand-hills. Here was a party of twenty or thirty fishermen employed in hauling in a very long seine, but their labours were not rewarded with much success, for it contained

only about a dozen fish, which were not unlike our mackerel. When the bag of the net approached the shore, two of the men stripped themselves and swam into the sea, to prevent the fish from escaping over the sides. One of these men had several amulets or charms, like those mentioned in a former letter, suspended round his neck, and as they are considered a protection against dangers of all kinds, I was surprised to observe that he took them off and left them with his clothes on the beach. But it appeared that he had more confidence in his own extraordinary powers of swimming than in his amulets.

Finding the beach very unproductive in shells, I now proceeded to search among the sand-hills for insects, knowing that in England such situations generally abound with them, especially with those of the order *coleoptera*.



I found very few that were valuable, but the coldness of the weather may account for this scarcity. On my return homewards I passed through some orchards and low swampy fields, surrounded by hedges of prickly-pear bushes and American aloes intermixed, which formed a most formidable barrier, absolutely impenetrable, except by a man clad in armour. I found several new plants in blossom, among which were an orobanche with blue flowers, a beautiful scarlet fumitory, a species of broom, the common blue lupine of our gardens, and a vetch, with the flower green and brown, with several others, the names of which I had no means of ascertaining.

In the afternoon we observed that the crater of Etna, for the first time since we had been at Catania, was emitting smoke of a reddish black colour.

The morning of the day on which we set

out on our expedition to the mountain was fine and clear, but very cold. We were accompanied by four travellers, an Englishman, an Irishman, a Scotchman, and an Italian, who were staying at the hotel, and we had our landlord Abbate for a guide. We were all mounted on shabby horses and mules. We first followed the high road to Messina for a mile or two, and then turned off through very rough narrow lanes to the miserable little town or village of Nicolosi, which is about ten miles from Catania. Close to the road was the crater of an extinct volcano. We threw some large stones into it, and could hear them rattling down for many seconds afterwards. Though the country around Catania appears green and pleasant from a distance, upon a closer view it has but few attractions, for it is composed entirely of lava, either in a decomposed or

a solid state, and the roads, the walls, and the soil are all of the same dingy black colour. And at this early season the vineyards do not add to the beauty of the prospect. Nothing is visible but leafless stunted vine-stumps, planted at about three feet from each other, and tied to short upright supporters of wood or cane. The most common tree in the neighbourhood is the olive ; but though this is an evergreen, it is not very ornamental, for the foliage is of a dull melancholy tint. “The land of the olive and vine,” which would doubtless be a goodly and a pleasant land in summer, is almost as desolate in winter as “a land of briars and thorns.” We should have deferred our visit to Sicily till May or June : we might then have ascended to the top of the mountain, a pleasure which alone would have amply repaid us for the miseries of our voyage in the San

Pietro, and we should have made many valuable additions to our collections. We have been particularly unfortunate in the weather, which has been much more inclement than is usually the case at this time of the year.

Beyond Nicolosi our road lay for some distance over a desolate plain of fine black cinders, in which a very few stunted broom-bushes were the only plants that could find nourishment, and soon after we entered the woody district or Bosco, a beautiful forest, consisting chiefly of low oak-trees, the stems of some of which were three feet or more in diameter. The ground was here thickly covered with snow, and the air was intensely cold. The woody district forms a belt round the mountain sixty or seventy miles in circumference, and seven or eight in width, and is succeeded by the barren region, from the

commencement of which to the summit is said to be about seven miles more. But we had not penetrated the Bosco more than two miles, when the snow began to fall thickly around us; and as in this state of the atmosphere the view of the surrounding country would have been entirely obscured, by the advice of Abbate we determined on returning. Though we had provided ourselves with warm clothing, some of us were so benumbed by the cold, that we were obliged to dismount and walk, in order to restore sensation to our frozen limbs. The fear of a fall was another very sufficient reason for dismounting, for the path was exceedingly steep and rugged, and the snow made it still more dangerous. Some of our party, however, had full confidence in the sure feet and sagacity of their mules, and rode down in safety.

Before reaching Nicolosi we turned off to the right to Monte Rosso, across a plain of black sand or ashes, which were thrown out during the eruption of 1669, covering a space of fifteen square miles, and burying the fields and vineyards many feet deep. These ashes, and the torrent of lava which destroyed Catania, were discharged from the side of the mountain, and the immense heap of cinders around this new crater is now called Monte Rosso, or the Red Mountain. We found its sides so steep, and the cinders so fine and yielding, that we all dismounted and clambered up to the summit on foot, though our guide assured us that our mules would carry us up quite easily and safely. Though the atmosphere was still rather misty, the snow had ceased, and we had a beautiful view of the coast of Sicily as far as Cape Passaro, and of the mountains of Calabria in



Italy. Our guide pointed out to us the track of the lava of 1669. In its course are several hillocks, or islands, which being above the reach of the torrent, escaped the general destruction, and still retain their original verdure. The crater of Monte Rosso is now entirely filled up with ashes.

After we had enjoyed for some time the beautiful, but very singular view around us, we descended the hill on the other side. It was fortunate for one of our party that he had dismounted, for when towards the bottom, his horse lost his footing, and rolling over and over, he very quickly finished the descent in that manner. He did not receive the smallest injury.

We remained an hour to refresh ourselves and our beasts at a little inn at Nicolosi, where we were again requested to comply with the ridiculous custom of entering our

names in a book. It was late in the evening before we reached Catania. We did not ride into the town in the good order in which we started in the morning, for some of our party were several miles in advance of the others, who came straggling in singly, according to the condition of their wearied animals. Poor creatures! they had had a hard day's work indeed.

The following short account of the devastations occasioned by some eruptions of Mount Etna, I have abridged from several authors, who have described these outpourings of the fiery indignation of heaven upon the children of men. The last considerable eruption was in the year 1766, but it was not nearly so destructive as that of 1669. In that year the mountain had been giving warning for several months, that some terrible convulsion was about to take place.

The inhabitants of the island had been alarmed by dreadful subterraneous noises, while the crater of the mountain had been continually disgoring columns of fire and smoke, and projecting red hot masses of rock, some of which measured fifteen feet in diameter, to the distance of more than a mile. During these internal struggles, the island trembled from one end to the other. At length a torrent of lava burst forth from the side of the mountain, (from the spot where Monte Rosso now stands,) and pouring down with resistless fury, it soon reached the ill-fated city of Catania, a great part of which it overwhelmed. This torrent is said to have covered a space fourteen miles in length, nearly four in breadth, and of such a thickness, that in some places it retained a sensible warmth for eight years afterwards. In its progress it utterly destroyed the houses

and property of thirty thousand persons. Our friends the Benedictines had a very narrow escape, which I suppose they attributed to the interposition of their patron St. Nicholas, for the lava passed within five yards of their convent, when it turned off in another direction, and at length finished its destructive course by pouring into the sea. It is impossible to imagine anything more terrible than this encounter. A river of red hot lava, several miles in width, and many yards in depth, suddenly opposed in its course by the sea! Authors who had an opportunity of witnessing this conflict inform us, that the noise was infinitely louder than the loudest thunder; that the air was darkened by clouds of steam and sulphurous vapours, that the sea was rendered muddy for months, and that all the fish on the coast were destroyed.

We may form some idea of the prodigious quantity of matter which this mountain has disgorged, when we read that it has been calculated that the lava, ashes, and other bodies thrown out in 1669 amounted to four hundred and thirty-five millions of cubic yards, and that in former eruptions the lava alone covered a space thirty miles in length, and fifteen in breadth. The whole of the coast from Catania to the distance of twenty miles or more to the northward, consists entirely of rocks of lava thrown out at various times, and in many places the torrent has encroached upon the ancient boundary of the sea, which has been driven back for several miles. During an eruption in 1329, it is said that the ashes were carried as far as Malta.

Though Catania is situated at the distance of about twenty miles from the crater of

Etna, it has been nearly destroyed by eruptions and earthquakes more than once, and after such repeated and dreadful disasters, we cannot but wonder at the infatuation of the inhabitants in rebuilding the city in the same situation, which appears to possess no advantage over other parts of the coast, as it has no natural harbour. In the year 121 B.C., it was injured to such an extent, that the Romans excused the inhabitants from paying tribute for ten years, to enable them to recover from their losses; and in 1169, it was nearly destroyed by an earthquake, when fifteen thousand persons perished. But the most terrible catastrophe of this kind was in the year 1693, when the city was reduced to a heap of ruins, and eighteen thousand persons were buried beneath its walls. Catania also suffered greatly in 1783, by the earthquake which destroyed Messina.



But though Mount Etna has been the cause of so much misery to the inhabitants in its neighbourhood, they derive great benefits from it also, for the forests which cover its sides furnish them with an abundant supply of wood and charcoal, and from the higher regions are procured snow and ice, which, during the great heat of summer, are ranked among the necessities of life in this island. It is even said that the Bishop of Catania formerly derived a great part of his revenue from the sale of ice, which is exported to Italy and to Malta.

Mount Etna is between ten and eleven thousand feet, or, as nearly as possible, two miles in height. When viewed from Catania, its apparent height is much increased by there being no very high land near it.

We left Catania for Messina in a shabby open carriage, which we had hired for the

journey. It was drawn by three mules abreast, and a boy was stationed behind to take care of our luggage. This was slung under the body of the carriage, in a strong net made of rope, and as it almost touched the ground, our heavy boxes were very useful as ballast for the rickety vehicle. The roads were much better than we had expected to find them, but we experienced jolting enough to make us feel great anxiety for the safety of our shells, and bottles of animals preserved in spirits; however, they have escaped with but little injury.

For upwards of twenty miles our road lay over lava, but of so old a date that it has now become a fertile soil, covered with vineyards and olive plantations. This change is brought about both by the slow decomposition of the lava itself, and by the formation of vegetable earth, from the decay first of

lichens, and afterwards of larger plants, which take root on its surface. The process is always very slow, but some lavas are decomposed in a much shorter time than others. We are informed by a Sicilian writer, that a torrent, which Diodorus mentions as having been thrown out nearly two thousand years ago, is still only partially decomposed, and it is certain that in a very much shorter time than this the lava of some eruptions has been converted into a fruitful soil.

We stopped a short time at the town of Aci Reale. Many of the people here appeared to be in a deplorable state of poverty, and our carriage was surrounded by a company of half-starved, and more than half-naked children, forming a most affecting picture of utter destitution and misery.

Our road continued over the lava till

within a few miles of Giardini, where we remained for the night. It is a small, poor town or village, but very pleasantly situated close to the sea, commanding a fine view of the opposite coast of Calabria, and had we not been anxious to reach Messina as soon as possible, we should have been glad to have spent a few days there. We had been informed at Catania, that the best accommodations in the place were to be found in the house of a priest; who was in the habit of lodging travellers. However, our driver, contrary to the orders he had received, thought proper to take us to a little inn, where we soon discovered our mistake; but as the house appeared very clean, and the people decent and civil, we determined not to change our quarters. But while we were seated at supper, an emissary from the priest, who it appears had

expected our arrival, came into the house in a violent passion, threatening vengeance on our host, and on every member of his family, who, in return, made no scruple of abusing both priest and servant in terms that showed no great reverence for their pastor. Of course, we took no part in the fray, which ended as conflicts of this kind generally do where about a dozen tongues are opposed to one, in the weaker party being at length overpowered and compelled to quit the field. We were most comfortably entertained at this little inn, and were agreeably surprised to find, that the beds, besides being clean and dry, were entirely free from *fleas*.

In the morning we sent the carriage on to meet us on the road, while we ascended the hill above Giardini to Taormina to visit the remains of a very large theatre. As we climbed the steep path, we found several

new plants in blossom, and we were struck with the size and beauty of some of the spurges, which were four feet or more in height, with strong woody stems and spreading branches, appearing like oak-trees in miniature. We found two sorts of *antirrhinum*, one with a very long spur to the blossom, a species of hound's-tongue, with a pencilled flower, a very large white *cistus*, a *convolvulus*, apparently the same as the *convolvulus major* of our gardens, a pretty vetch, like the *vicia cracca*, and, lastly, we had the pleasure of gathering a few very large violets of a pale blue colour, and with an odour as sweet and powerful as those of our own green hedge-banks.

At the top of the hill we met a shabbily-dressed man, who said he had once been a priest, in waiting to conduct us to the theatre. It was certainly a very interesting relic of



antiquity ; but the beautiful prospect around us prevented me from paying much attention to its mouldering walls. The day was remarkably clear and bright, and our view extended far over the blue Mediterranean, and to the coast of Italy, while before us rose Mount Etna, the most beautiful of all the Sicilian antiquities ; though I think it is not seen to so much advantage from this situation as from Catania. It is said that the theatre of Taormina is the largest in the world. Our companion, the ex-priest, informed us, that it was admirably well formed for conveying the sound of the speaker's voice ; in proof of this, he descended to the lower part, and began an oration in Latin, not one word of which could we distinguish, but whether the fault lay in his bad enunciation, or in the ruined and incomplete state of the building, we could not tell. The

walls, which are faced with red bricks, are composed of very small stones, but time has so hardened the cement in which they are set, that they are united into a mass almost as firm and durable as a solid rock. Having visited the ruins of a temple of Apollo, and of a tomb over which two modern churches have been erected, we bid farewell to the unsuccessful orator, and descended the hill to meet the carriage. In our way we met a man, dressed in priest's attire, but as dirty and ragged as a beggar, and such to our great surprise he proved to be.

We were delighted with the prospects between Giardini and Messina. The road for a great part of the way runs very near the sea, which at Messina is contracted into a narrow channel. On our left was a chain of noble mountains, many of which were capped with snow, and on some lofty

and apparently inaccessible points, almost overhanging the road, we were surprised to see little villages perched in the most romantic situations imaginable. It appeared to me that a dozen men, furnished with a good supply of large stones, might defend these eyries from the attack of an army, supposing the assailants to be unprovided with artillery.

We passed many beautiful orange and lemon plantations on the road, but the crops in most of them had been gathered in. We stopped at one of these plantations, when the owner went to his trees, and gathered for us twenty very fine-flavoured oranges, for which he asked a sum equal to rather more than twopence of English money. On this, and on the preceding day we crossed the dry beds of several mountain-torrents. As the floods come down very suddenly from

the mountains, it has happened that travellers have been caught between two streams, and have been obliged to wait on the bank for the water to subside—like the man in the fable, though he, poor fellow, was laughed at for his folly.

We arrived at this city, Messina, late in the evening. We are at the Hotel du Nord, where we are most comfortably accommodated, and we are much pleased with the civility and kindness of our hostess Carolina Möller. Those travellers who have not much knowledge of the Italian language will be glad to find that Carolina and her head waiter both speak English, the latter so correctly, that he might almost be mistaken for a native of our island.

We had been informed at Catania that a fine ship, the *Asia*, was expected to leave this port shortly for England, and accordingly

we hastened forwards, hoping to obtain a passage home in her. We are now sorry to find that she sailed several days ago, and to add to our disappointment, there is no English vessel with good accommodations in the port. We have therefore engaged a passage in a Sicilian brig for Marseilles, from whence we shall proceed through France to Bordeaux, and so home by the first suitable vessel that leaves that port for England. The cabin of the Sicilian brig is large, and tolerably clean, and the captain and crew are much more respectable in their appearance than those of the San Pietro.

Messina is a large and well-built city, and it has a beautiful marina, or quay, which is very wide, and about a mile in length. It commands a delightful view of the opposite coast, and of a fine range of mountains, at the back of the town: many of the highest

peaks are still covered with snow. The streets of Messina are wide and clean, and there are several fine churches and other buildings. The city has been almost entirely rebuilt since the earthquake of 1783. The harbour is safe and capacious, and is sheltered by a long narrow point of land of a semicircular shape. This natural pier was fabled by the ancients to have been formed by a sickle which some deity threw into the sea.

You have read of the once terrible Scylla and Charybdis, and have heard that they are no longer numbered among the perils of the deep. The former is a rock close to the Calabrian shore, a few miles from Messina, and the latter nothing more than an inconsiderable eddy, occasioned by the current through the straits. If the descriptions we have received of this dreaded whirlpool have



not been greatly exaggerated, we may conclude that some change in the form of the coast, or of the bottom of the sea has diminished its dangerous violence.

The weather has been so cold since we arrived here, that we have had no opportunity of collecting anything, but a few plants. I do not think the neighbourhood would be very productive at any season of the year.

The oil of bergamot may be purchased in Messina, at a very low price, and I have bought a considerable quantity of it. It is extracted from the rind of a species of lemon, cultivated at Reggio, anciently Rhegium, on the opposite coast, where St. Paul touched on his voyage from Melita towards Rome. But I fear that my bottles will never reach their destination, as we shall be subjected to the ordeal of two custom-house examinations.

A day or two ago, we witnessed a grand procession in honour of St. Joseph. The most singular part of the ceremony, was the manner in which the populace testified their joy on the occasion. In some of the open parts of the town, were laid long rows of small cannon, or mortars, which were about three inches in height, and half an inch in the bore, with the metal very thick and flat at the bottom, so that they would stand upright on the pavement. Some of these rows contained several hundreds, and when the figure of St. Joseph arrived opposite the spot, they were fired by a man with a port-fire, walking along the line, producing at a very small expense, exactly the effect of a running fire of musketry. There was another procession of *penitents*, as they were called. They were dressed in white robes, covering the head and body, with holes for

their eyes, and they had crowns of thorns on their heads. They were escorted by soldiers and a band of music.

The captain of our vessel has called to say that he intends to sail to-morrow, though the wind is not very favourable, but the weather appears settled and fine, and we hope for prosperous gales.

## LETTER VII.

*Marseilles, May 2nd, 1834.*

WE are at length safely landed at this port after a most wearisome voyage of nearly five weeks! The distance is only about six hundred miles, and the passage is frequently made in four or five days, but we have sailed at the least twelve hundred miles, and have been compelled to take refuge in several ports since we left Messina.

We sailed on Monday night, March 24th: during the day the wind had changed in our favour, bringing with it a delightfully warm and spring-like temperature, and with these fair prospects at the beginning of our voyage, we hoped for a speedy termination. Our situ-

ation was not very enviable. The cabin was large, and tolerably clean, for as the vessel was nearly new, there had not been time for the dirt to accumulate, but nothing had ever been done to make the place comfortable. It had neither stove, cupboard, shelf, nor furniture of any kind, except one small deal table, and the only adornment the sides and ceiling had ever received, was a thick coating of tar. The sleeping berths were nothing more than rough wooden frames fastened to the sides of the cabin with ropes. They were furnished with bedding, but we made use of nothing but the mattresses, as we had purchased some sheets at Messina, and our sea-cloaks and coats served us for blankets. We had also bought three rush-bottomed chairs. The favourable opinion we had formed of the respectability of the captain and his men was very soon changed. The cap-

tain's father, who was the owner of the vessel, boasted that he had once commanded a privateer, and we strongly suspected that his attacks had not been confined to vessels of any particular nation. He was a tall thin old man, with little restless eyes, sparkling with cunning and villany; but he was the best seaman on board, and on the subject of wind and weather, he had almost a gift of prophecy. He prided himself on the warlike appearance of his vessel. On deck he had four very ancient long six-pounders, and in one corner of the cabin were a dozen muskets of English, French, and Spanish manufacture, which had evidently seen many years hard service. One or two of these pieces appeared to have been favourites with the owners, who had carved the initials of their names, and other devices on the stocks. They had perhaps assisted in many a dreadful scene of rapine and bloodshed.



The captain's brother, Diego, a fine lad about sixteen years of age, appeared rather more civilized than any of his companions. He had some talent for drawing, and had painted a large plan of the flags of various nations, with tolerably well-executed views of vessels in the corners. Wishing to encourage a brother artist, I gave him some paper and other drawing materials, but I very soon repented having done so, for he became a most importunate beggar, and annoyed me all the rest of the voyage by his petitions. He especially coveted a small two-bladed pen-knife of mine; and he had the impertinence to say to Captain R——, that if I did not give it to him, he would find some opportunity of taking it, for he was determined it should never leave the vessel. It is still in my pocket, however.

We had also a musician in our company,

a hawk-nosed fellow, called the "Scrivano," who kept the log-book and the accounts, but took little or no part in the management of the vessel. He could sing and play on the guitar, but he was a very poor performer. However, the captain said that he was skilful in the use of another instrument, the *stiletto*, and that he had been imprisoned for two years for some deed committed with this weapon.

My companions and myself occupied the only berths in the cabin, but the captain, his father and brother, and the stabbing Scrivano, usually slept there, lying on the floor, wrapped up in their cloaks. Delightful companions for the night, were they not, especially he of the *stiletto*? But though the company of such men was in the highest degree hateful and disgusting, I believe there was no danger of their doing us any personal

injury, for our names and a description of our persons were entered in the papers of the vessel, and a very strict inquiry would have been made at Marseilles if any of the passengers had been missing.

Every evening, except in very bad weather, all the crew assembled aft, and chanted a Latin hymn or prayer, which lasted about half an hour. Sometimes at the conclusion, Diego and another boy kissed the hands of the old pirate, who in return muttered a few words, intended, as we supposed, for a blessing.

I kept no journal during the voyage, but I think it was on the second night after leaving Messina that we passed within a few miles of Stromboli, one of the Lipari islands, and we had the pleasure of seeing jets of fire of a bright scarlet colour issuing from the crater. Our captain said, that had we

been nearer we should have heard loud noises. Stromboli is an unquiet spirit, always grumbling and fuming. It has been suggested, however, that he may perform the part of a *safety-valve* for the escape of gasses generated by internal combustion, and that perhaps by this means his gigantic neighbour, Mount Etna, is kept in the peaceable and harmless state in which it has now remained for many years.

We continued to have favourable, but very light winds, till we were about one hundred and fifty miles from Messina, when, after a few hours' calm, we were assailed by a strong breeze from the north-westward. Finding it impossible to make head against it, we were obliged to bear up, and to run back for shelter under Lipari, the principal of the groupe of volcanic islands of that name. It appeared to be six or seven miles in length,

and was high and rocky, but the lower parts were cultivated. There was a large town, and a castle in a little bay towards the south, and near the northern point was a high white cliff, which we were informed was composed entirely of pumice-stone. As there was no good anchorage here, we continued for some hours sailing backwards and forwards, under the friendly shelter of the island, hoping for a change of wind, till at length the old pirate, after a careful survey of the heavens, predicted that the gale would continue, and he said that we must seek a safer harbour. Accordingly we scudded before the wind, and in a few hours cast anchor in the Bay of Milazzo, on the northern coast of Sicily. This bay is sheltered by a narrow tongue of land, which extends two or three miles into the sea, forming a tolerably safe harbour, except during northerly winds, when it is en-

tirely exposed. We passed a very uncomfortable night, the vessel pitching heavily.

In the morning we went on shore to buy provisions, for Captain R——, to whom we had entrusted the business of laying in a sea-stock, appeared, from the scanty manner in which he had provided for us, to have calculated upon our having a very short voyage indeed. On landing we first went to a little dirty inn, and satisfied our present appetites with some broiled fish and eggs, for no meat of any kind could be procured. The town of Milazzo is a miserable place, swarming with beggars of all ages, but chiefly children, and the country in the neighbourhood is very flat and uninteresting. After a long inland walk we returned to the town, tired and dispirited, and sat down to rest ourselves in a coffee-house kept by a very fat woman named Rosa. Here we remained more than two hours



waiting for some milk for our coffee, for the presiding goddess assured us it would arrive in a few minutes. It came at last, accompanied by some excellent butter and new bread, and we made a very comfortable meal ; after which, as it was now dark, we proceeded on board for the night, for the beds at the inn appeared much less inviting than our own.

The next day the wind shifted round to the northward, directly into the bay, and raised such a sea, that it was quite impossible for us to go on shore. We passed a most comfortless day, the vessel rolling and pitching fearfully ; and towards noon the gale increased to such a degree, that for some hours we were in continual expectation that our cable would have parted. But the wind became more moderate in the night, and the next morning the sea was sufficiently smooth to allow us to pay our fat friend Donna Rosa

another visit, though we had some difficulty in persuading our surly captain to lower his boat for us. We now walked to the other side of the promontory, on which the town is situated, where we found a fine, wide, pebbly beach, some miles in extent. Here we fell in with a sportsman, who very civilly requested our acceptance of a few small birds he had killed that morning. Soon afterwards we saw a monk approaching us, striding along the beach at the rate of five or six miles an hour, and throwing his arms about in a most violent manner. He saluted us with much civility, and when Captain R—— alluded to the extraordinary display we had just witnessed, he said that he was rehearsing a sermon which he intended to preach the next morning.

Near the beach we observed a small species of aloe, with a yellow flower. We found

no shells, and our only entomological prize was a single bad specimen of a butterfly resembling our wood argus.

Before we entered the town again I cut a little switch, determined to make use of it to repel the crowds of begging children who had surrounded us in the morning. But their wretched appearance quite disarmed me, and I found it impossible to strike their naked backs. The little unfortunates soon discovered that my stick was perfectly harmless, and we were again hunted through the streets from one end of the town to the other.

When we returned on board in the evening, we made a discovery, which proved that we had not unjustly suspected the character of our shipmates, and which also accounted for the rapid consumption of our provisions. We found that we were in a den of thieves !

My carpet-bag which contained between two and three hundred dollars, had evidently been forced open far enough to admit of the introduction of a hand, and a considerable amount had been abstracted. I do not know how other travellers would have acted in such a case, but after a consultation on the subject, we determined to bear our loss patiently, and quietly. For had we taken the proper steps for bringing the robbers to justice, it might have occasioned a long delay in our voyage, and it was very doubtful whether we should have obtained redress, as we could not state the exact sum we had lost, for we had not kept a very correct account of our money or expenditure, since we left Malta. Even if we had recovered our loss, it would not have been very agreeable nor prudent to have continued our voyage in company with a dozen enraged Sicilians. However, we

determined to keep strict watch over the plunderers for the future, and in the morning, when my companions went on shore for provisions, I remained on board as a guard.

The captain had assured us that he should not sail till the middle of the next day, and had persuaded us not to purchase our sea-stock till the morning. At midnight, however, he got under weigh, and proceeded to sea. And now for several days we suffered greatly from hunger, though we were in no danger of absolute starvation, for the captain was very willing to supply us with such trash as Sicilian seamen are accustomed to feed upon. The rogue had deceived us about the time of his leaving Milazzo, in order that, having no provisions of our own, we might be obliged to purchase of him. So for nearly a week we lived chiefly upon bad biscuit, Sicilian cheese, dried peas and beans, or if we had

wished for a change of diet we might have feasted upon garlic, or upon olives swimming in rancid oil. We should have considered a piece of English ship-beef, or pork, a very great luxury, had it been ever so salt and tough, but there was no meat of any kind on board.

After beating about for five or six days, during which time we again had occasion to take shelter for a night under Lipari, we at length put into Palermo. We arrived late in the afternoon, and had been consoling ourselves with the prospect of a good meal, and a comfortable bed on shore, but, to our great disappointment, the captain declared that the water was too rough for us to land that evening. In the morning we put seals upon all our packages, in the presence of the old man and several of the crew, whose sullen faces showed that this proceeding did



not meet with their approbation; we then crossed the harbour to the Pratique office, where we were detained more than an hour, while our papers were under examination. The captains of several other vessels were at the office, for the same purpose as ourselves, and as the court in which we stood was very small, we were obliged to be extremely careful not to come in contact with any of them, as that might have subjected us to a long quarantine.

Palermo is a large and beautiful city. The handsome shops and the numbers of well-dressed people and of carriages in the streets, make it a very gay and entertaining place; but the weather was so wet during a great part of our stay there, and we were so exhausted by our long starvation, that we were prevented from seeing much of the city or the neighbourhood. There is a very

beautiful and extensive botanic-garden, open to the public, I believe, at all hours. The long shaded walks and pretty fountains would make it a delightful retreat in summer, but when we visited it there were very few flowers in blossom, most of the trees were leafless, and the rain was falling heavily.

We hired a coach one fine morning, and rode to the foot of Monte Pellegrino. There was a zigzag path to the top, but after ascending a few hundred yards, I found myself so weak and tired, that I turned back and waited for my companions at the bottom of the hill. In a stony uncultivated piece of ground, by the side of the path, I found a large yellow *asphodelus*, the *convolvulus major*, (the pink variety,) two or three kinds of *veronica*, and several other new plants. I saw many swallow-tailed butter-

flies, and two or three belonging to the genus *polyommatus*, which appeared quite different from the British species. As I had no net with me, I was unable to catch any of these butterflies, except one or two of the swallow-tails, which fled heavily and slowly. Green lizards were in great abundance. Wearied with chasing butterflies, I sat down by a large prickly-pear bush, to admire the brilliant colours and graceful movements of these little reptiles, as they pursued each other from leaf to leaf, appearing to vie with each other in feats of agility.

In an hour or two I was joined by my companions, whose resolution had failed them when about half-way up the mountain, but they gave such a description of the beautiful view they had enjoyed, that I almost regretted having remained behind. We determined to visit this spot again the

next day provided with our entomological apparatus ; but on our return to the city we met the captain of our vessel, who informed us that the wind was now fair, and that he should sail in the evening.

We did not leave Palermo without a good supply of provisions. Besides other articles, we bought a large basket-full of oranges and sweet-lemons, and a bag of potatoes, but the last proved to be very inferior in quality to those that are usually given to pigs in England. When boiled they were black and watery. Hoping to put a stop to future pilfering, we now removed all the chests and boxes belonging to the captain and his gang to one side of the cabin, and placed our luggage and baskets of provisions on the other, in order that the enemy might have no excuse for entering upon our territories. But the old pirate, the most determined thief of the

party, not at all approving of this arrangement, soon after sily drove a nail into the boards between our berths, and hanged his hat upon it. This I immediately removed to the other side of the cabin. However, with all our precautions, we could not prevent these rogues from sharing our provisions with us ; and I believe that the musician and the painter had more than half of our oranges between them. And the principle, of “honour among thieves,” was entirely unknown to them, for they made no scruple of stealing from each other whenever opportunity offered.

The day after we left Palermo we passed very near to the little island of Ustrica, which appeared to be entirely cultivated. From this island we shaped a course, as nearly as the wind would permit, for the Straits of Bonifacio, between Corsica and Sardinia, but



after five days, during which we made very slow progress, we encountered a strong breeze from the westward, which soon compelled our timid mariners to run back for shelter under the island of Ponza, near the Bay of Naples. When it became dark we could see to the eastward a red light, which our captain said proceeded from Vesuvius. We remained under Ponza all night, sailing to and fro, and in the morning, as the water was tolerably smooth, we insisted upon going on shore for provisions, for our stock, by the assistance of our friends, was entirely exhausted, and we began to feel the pains of emptiness again. The captain opposed this measure vehemently ; but at length, by promising to buy them some fresh fish for their dinner, we persuaded two of the men to accompany us, contrary to his orders, for he had not much



authority over his disorderly crew. I do not know whether the scrivano entered in his journal that the passengers and a part of the crew were in a state of *mutiny* on that day, but such was the fact. With the prospect of several days of starvation before us if we did not land for provisions, we paid no regard to the captain's fierce looks, nor to his oft-repeated "Io sono capitano!"\* We had to row about a mile and a half to the town, which appeared to be a poor, small place, but we were not allowed to leave the quay, where we were guarded by two quarantine officers, to prevent our touching any person. We were soon supplied with an abundance of provisions, consisting of bread, bacon, fish, eggs, and potatoes, all of very good quality except the latter, which were

\* "I am captain!"

no better than those we had bought at Palermo. Neither meat nor oranges were to be procured. When we had purchased a sea-stock which we thought would be quite sufficient to last us for a fortnight, we hastened on board, but our appetites were so keen that we could not refrain from trying the quality of our provisions before we reached the vessel. So we made a most delightful meal of bread and *raw bacon*, while our men sat and laughed at us till they could scarcely use their oars. In the ecstasies of their merriment they shouted—"Ah, San Diavolo! San Diavolo!" which extraordinary invocation was not uncommonly made use of by them.

- In the course of the day a fair wind sprang up, and continued with us till we were about a hundred miles from the Straits of Bonifacio, when we were becalmed for

several days. During this time, while at the distance of sixty or seventy miles from the nearest land, we were visited by a great number of birds, many of which were so tired that they suffered themselves to be taken by the hand. The swallows must have been a long time on the wing, for they were so exhausted that the boy Diego caught upwards of thirty in the space of two days. The following is a list of our visitors: swallow, marten, sand-marten, wheatear, yellow-hammer, little butcher-bird, robin, stonechat, willow-wren, little horned owl, and hoopoe. The latter beautiful bird rested on the bowsprit for a few seconds only, and then took his departure, but the poor little owl was caught by one of the men and confined for several days, when he died, and was immediately boiled and eaten by his captor !

One day during these tedious calms a large object was discovered floating on the water, and the boat was sent to bring it on board. It proved to be a dead porpoise, and though the flesh was nearly black, it was all cut up and salted for future consumption, but the liver was fried and eaten immediately. From the fat of this fish a large quantity of very good oil, with scarcely any odour, was extracted. The men offered us a share of the fried liver, which we declined, but I must confess that it had a very tempting smell, and had the fish met with its death from the harpoon instead of from natural causes, I would certainly have partaken of this novel dish.

I must hasten to conclude this long narrative of our most tedious and miserable voyage. We passed through the Straits of Bonifacio on the evening of the seventh day

after leaving Ponza. As the passage is about ten miles wide, we had not a clear view of the islands, but the land on both sides appeared very high, and in many parts thickly wooded. Three days after passing the Straits we saw Cape Tagliato, on the French coast, from which we were distant twenty or thirty miles.

We now began to suffer again most severely from scarcity of provisions, for our stock was reduced to a few half-rotten potatoes and a very small piece of bacon, which we husbanded with the greatest care. Fortunately our misery was not increased by thirst, for we had an abundance of tolerably good water, and there were several casks of the red Sicilian wine on board. I made many attempts to relieve our wants by fishing, but though often tantalized with *bites* I could not succeed in hooking a single fish,

and was at length obliged to abandon all hopes of obtaining a meal in this way, while our men laughed heartily at the disappointment of “Il Signor Lungo,”\* as they called me.

The day before we arrived we fell in with a French pilot, from whom we obtained a supply of bread, the only article of food he could spare us. It was very dry and stale, but we thought it delicious, and made a hearty meal on it.

We landed at this port on Sunday, April 27th, and we shall leave it again to-morrow for Bordeaux. The prospect of travelling four hundred miles in a rumbling, sluggish diligence is not agreeable, but we console ourselves with thinking that whatever inconveniences we may be subjected to on the

\* “The long gentleman,”



journey *starvation* will not be one of them. After five days' rest and a diligent use of those restoratives which French artists are so clever in compounding, we are now quite recovered from our long abstinence. I should have said that the *body* is recovered ; but a slight degree of mental weakness yet remains, for even when the animal wants have been fully satisfied, the imagination is still craving and anticipating the pleasures of the next meal.

If the information we have received be correct, we shall arrive at Bordeaux two days before the departure of a steam-packet from that port for Falmouth.

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